The Bowen/Wing Family

Six Generations
In the United States

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Six Generations
In the United States

Edited by Bob Wing
May 1994

NOTE: This book was originally created and printed into a book with both a hard cover and soft cover. It was converted into PDF format in 2026. Minor corrections were made but all information and details remain the same.

The family tree pages starting at page 123 were recreated due to the inability to convert those pages into PDF format. The family tree was NOT updated to add new marriages, births and deaths and dates remain the same as of the original 1994 publication date except for minor corrections and enhancements to the dates (e.g. 05 was changed to 1905).

Dedication

Today we are Wongs, Lous, Wings, Dangs, and Ah-Tyes. The Fifth and Sixth Generations add Moritas, Pitts, and Jungs. Yet even though none of us bear the name, we are all Bowens.

The Bowen family spans the entire history of Chinese Americans. We have broken color lines, defied taboos and opened new ground, usually with little consciousness that what we did was unusual.

This booklet is dedicated to Mary Bowen Wing, my beloved grandmother, and Elsye Bowen Won, my great aunt and the family's main historian, as a first attempt to piece together what we have wrought. I hope it will give all of us Bowens a little more wind to lift our wings, and that it will help bring forth future generations of Bowens, whatever names they may bear.

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Cover Picture: Family of Mary Wong Ching and Lee Bo Wen at His 70th Birthday, 1912

Back row (l. to r.): Harry Wong (nephew of Mary Wong Ching), Wong Buck Hin (husband of Mamie), Frank Bowen (son of Lee Bo Wen)–holding son Albert, James Bowen (son of Lee Bo Wen), Edward Bowen (son of Lee Bo Wen), Tong Woo (husband of Anne); Second row from top: Mary (daughter of James), Rose (daughter of Frank), Lillian (daughter of Frank), Anne Bowen (daughter of Lee Bo Wen), Lena (wife of Harry Wong)–holding daughter Emma, Anna (daughter of Frank); Third row from top: Mamie Bowen (daughter of Lee Bo Wen), Rose (wife of Frank), Mary Wong Ching–holding Florence (daughter of James), Lee Bo Wen, Susie (wife of James), Lillie (wife of Edward), Fourth row from top: Ida (daughter of Mamie); George (son of Frank), Katie (daughter of Anne), Henrye (son of James), Alice (daughter of Mamie), Bottom row: Lillian (daughter of Mamie), Elizabeth (daughter of Frank), Edward (son of Frank), Dewey (son of James), Corinne (daughter of Frank), Grayce (daughter of James), Elsye (daughter of James). See Family Tree Charts, pp. 123-130.

Backgrounds of front and back covers are pages from James Bowen's testimony of 1937.

Notes and Acknowledgments

Although titled "The Bowen/Wing Family," this booklet is mainly about the Lee Bo Wen/Mary Wong Ching family, the James Bowen/Susie Wong Bowen family, and the Fung Gum Wing/Mary Bowen Wing family. The author of each article is noted; all others were written by the editor.

The book consists primarily of the memories of various family members. Although sometimes elaborately disguised and often vehemently denied, individual memory is actually the substance of much written history, and memory is notoriously uncertain. One person experiences and remembers the same event very differently from another. The same person remembers the event differently at different times in their lives. Often conjecture becomes fact, and fact is forgotten. Be that as it may, I have tried to piece together the best version of truth available to me at this time. I am sure much will be modified by future work.

Each of the authors had his/her preferred way of spelling Chinese words. I reluctantly decided that clarity would be served by standardizing them. I have used Gong-Gong (the Mandarin standard), Por-Por (Por-Por's preferred spelling), Lung Doo (from the Lung Doo Society), and Ha Juk (from the Ha Juk Society).

Auntie E in front of Fruitvale house, 1926

My main acknowledgment is to Elsye Bowen Won, my wonderful great aunt, the family's main historian. She collected, safekept and organized important material from her father, James, and added much to it through research and gathering stories from different family members. Most of what we know about Auntie E's parents and grandparents comes through her or through the documents she preserved. As we all know, Auntie E passed away on March 18, 1994. To my great

regret, Auntie never saw the final version of this family history, which was originally her project.

Essential contributions were also made by Dolores Wong and Leland Wing, my aunt and dad. Both provided enthusiasm and support which spread throughout the family, and both wrote extensively about their experiences.

The work and encouragement of my sister Linda (Day) Wing and my cousin Gigi Dang were also crucial to this project. Day and I started on this project years ago, but were unable to carry it through til now. Thanks to Por-Por, all of my great aunts and aunts for their important contributions and support, and to my cousins for their insightful writing. Anna Bowen Wong, Mable Wong Lem and Joyce Wye Mar were also very helpful.

Agnes Chan translated James Bowen's testimonial from the Chinese and provided other important information. Him Mark Lai generously shared his research, data base, and papers he has written, and made thoughtful comments on the manuscript. My Auntie Lilac Wing, the main family historian on my mother's side of the family, provided useful books, maps and other resources. The Chungshan, Lung Doo and Ha Juk Societies of Hawaii also gave maps and information about China.

My sister Laraine Wing took on the big task of desktop publishing the booklet, designing the cover, and scanning the photographs. She is responsible for the quality of this booklet. My sisters and sister-in-law Jean Yonemura Wing copy edited the text.

Finally, special thanks to my daughter Josina whose 7th grade family history project got me started on this booklet and who put up with me as I carried it through.

Bob Wing
May 1994

Some Unique Features of the Bowen/Wing Family

The First Generation

Lee Bo Wen was part of the very first wave of Chinese who came to the U.S. in 1854, and has a continuous history here since then. We are now six generations in this country.

Lee Bo Wen came as a child, only 12 years old. Mary Wong Ching was one of the few Chinese women to come to the U.S. in the 19th century, especially who married and raised a family.

Mary Wong Ching was a very powerful and independent woman who openly took and lived with lovers, brought three grandchildren to live with her when she was with one of these lovers, and was a member of, or strongly associated with, the Hop Sing Tong. And then she returned to the family and eventually died as part of it.

Lee Bo Wen, Mary Wong Ching and their family lived through the Gold Rush, the building of the railroads, the origins of agribusiness, the anti-Chinese riots, Chinese exclusion, etc.—a time when most returned to China or died here with families back in China or without families.

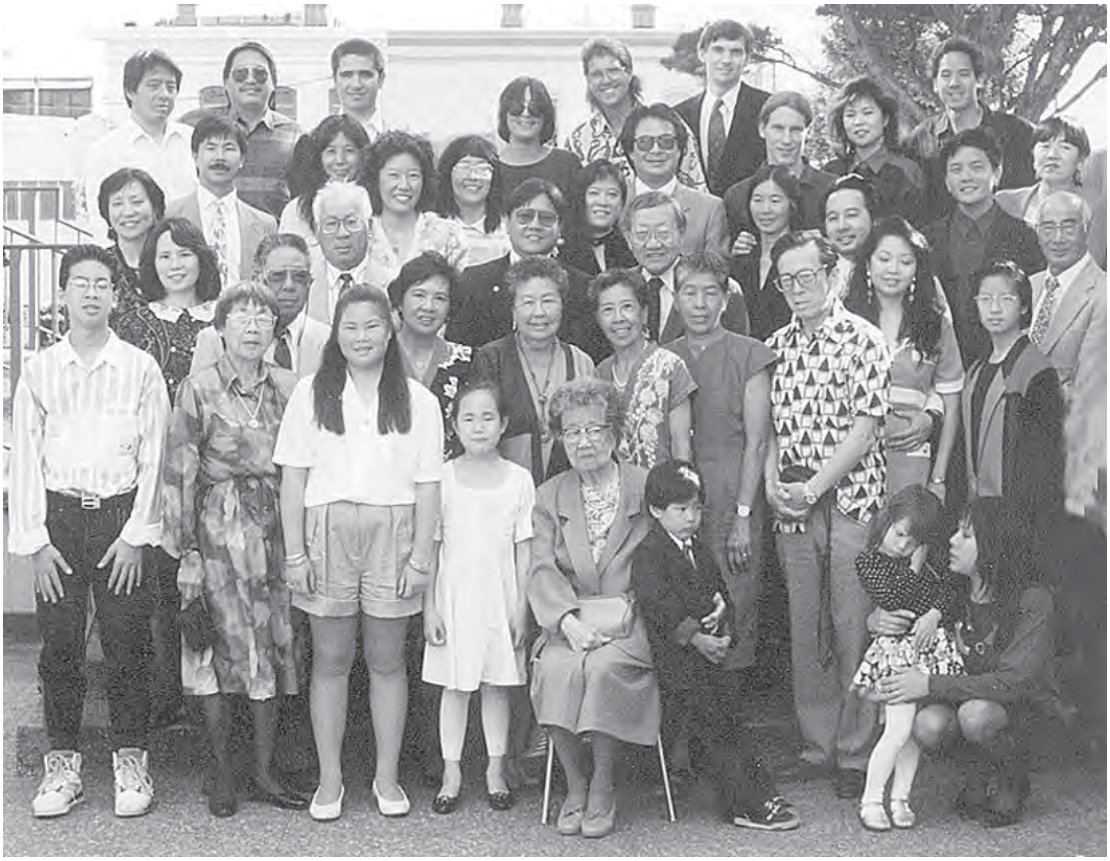
The Second Generation

At a time when literacy was rare in China and a mark of good education in the U.S., James Bowen was biliterate.

Susie Wong, James' wife, was also born in the United States, in Monterey.

The Bowen family broke the color line in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, and their children were among the first Chinese admitted to public school.

Mary Wing's 90th Birthday, March 1992



Back row (l. to r.): Derek, Nik, Joel, John, Edward; Second row from top: Butch, Robbin, Shelley, Joanne, Karen, Bob, Charles, Donna, Mitchell; Third row from top: Jean, Perry, Pudgy, Gigi, Delbert, Monica, Barry, Marshall, Jai; Fourth row from top: Laraine, Bud, Rhetta, Dolores, Pauline, Janie, John, Chau, Nicole; Front row: Frisco, Lily, Josina, Teri, Por-Por, Ryan, Lindsay, Dana. See Family Tree Charts, pp. 131-136.

The Third Generation

All of Por-Por's siblings (but not herself) married other American-born Chinese. The third generation of Bowens and their spouses were part of a small but fairly self-conscious community of American-born Chinese that formed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Bowens were among the founders of the first Oakland Chinese semi-pro baseball team and Al Bowen was the first Chinese-American professional baseball player.

Por-Por's older brother Dewey was a Chinese pioneer in vaudeville. Uncle Henrye, Uncle Gay and Uncle Johnny were among the first Chinese to be allowed to hold federal jobs (at the Post Office).

Por-Por, her siblings and their spouses are among the most energetic, modern and adventuresome people of their generation of any race or nationality that I know. The same holds for my parents' generation.

Gong-Gong successfully traversed one of the few routes to economic success available to Chinese early in this century: he became a member of the Hop Sing Tong and ran a gambling house. With Por, he opened up dry goods stores and they successfully operated these businesses through the World War II boom.

The Fourth Generation

The fourth generation of Bowens (the Vallejo Wings) and their spouses were part of the first wave of Chinese-American graduates of U.S. colleges, particularly the University of California at Berkeley.

This generation partook of the post-World War II prosperity, and helped to break residential color barriers in white middle class neighborhoods.

They were among the first Chinese admitted into the professions (after World War II). Like so many of their Asian colleagues, some of them eventually hit the glass ceiling in government or large corporations.

Uncle Del became the first Chinese-American judge in America, appointed by Edmund G. Brown.

The Fifth Generation

Much of the fifth generation became the first Asian-American student, community, civil rights, labor, peace and socialist activists.

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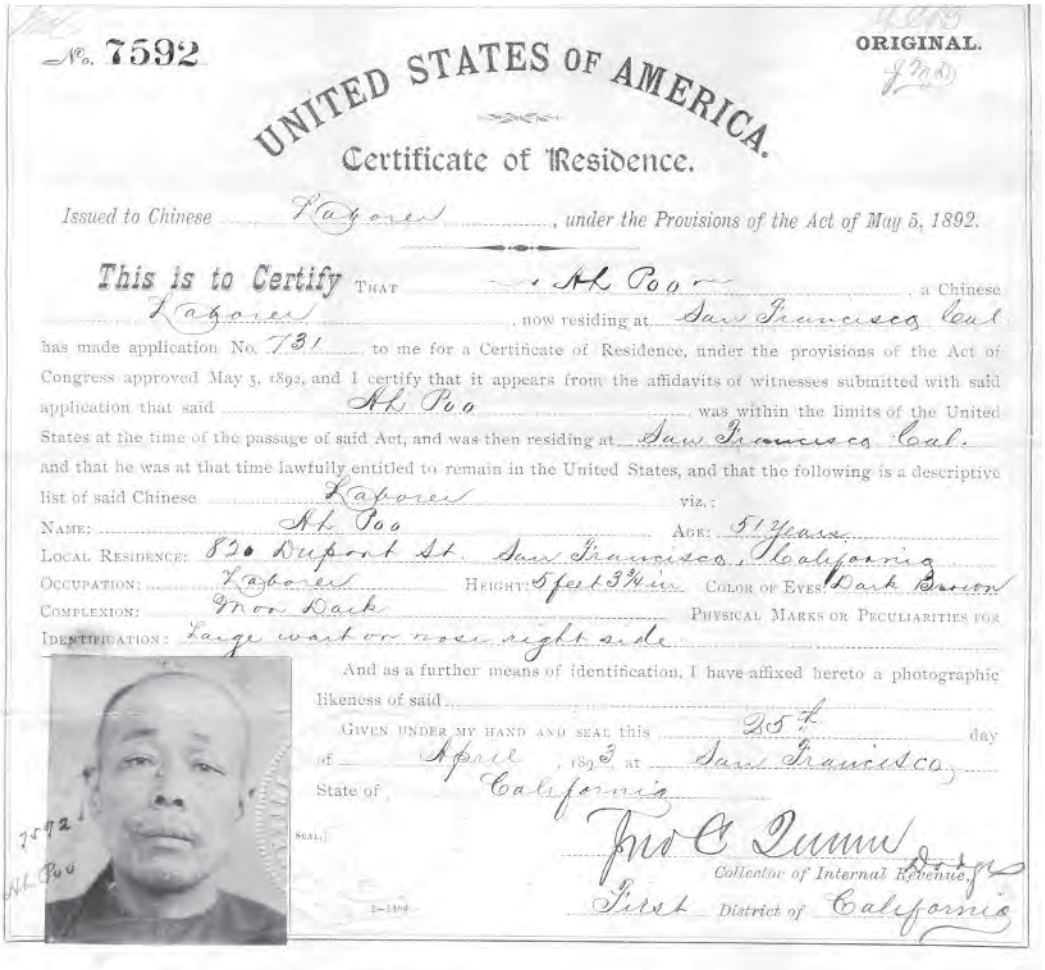
PART I
FROM CHINA TO THE U.S.



No. 7592 ORIGINAL.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Certificate of Residence.

Issued to Chinese Laborer, *under the Provisions of the Act of May 5, 1892.*

This is to Certify THAT Ah Poo, a Chinese Laborer, now residing at San Francisco Cal has made application No. 731 to me for a Certificate of Residence, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved May 5, 1892, and I certify that it appears from the affidavits of witnesses submitted with said application that said Ah Poo was within the limits of the United States at the time of the passage of said Act, and was then residing at San Francisco Cal. and that he was at that time lawfully entitled to remain in the United States, and that the following is a descriptive list of said Chinese Laborer viz.:

NAME: Ah Poo AGE: 51 Years

LOCAL RESIDENCE: 820 Dupont St. San Francisco, California

OCCUPATION: Laborer HEIGHT: 5 feet 3¾ in COLOR OF EYES: Dark Brown

COMPLEXION: Moon Dark PHYSICAL MARKS OR PECULIARITIES FOR IDENTIFICATION: Large wart on nose right side

And as a further means of identification, I have affixed hereto a photographic likeness of said

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL this 25th day of April, 1893, at San Francisco, State of California

7592 Ah Poo

SEAL.

Jno C Quinn Dodge

Collector of Internal Revenue,

First District of California

Lee Bo Wen's Certificate of Residence, 1893

Map of China

Guangdong Ancestors

All of our Chinese-born ancestors came from the greater Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong Province in China. Guangdong is the most southerly coastal province of China and is slightly less than half the size of California. Today 63 million people live in Guangdong, double that of California but less than 5% of China's total population. Yet 90-95% of Chinese emigrants to the United States before 1965 came from the tiny Pearl River Delta region of this province. Why?

In 1757 Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, was designated by the Chinese imperial government as the only port open to foreign trade. The Opium War between China and Britain (1839-42) established nearby Hong Kong as a British colony and further opened the Guangzhou area to western influence. One result was that Cantonese developed a powerful nationalism in response to foreign aggression: Hong Xiuchuan, who led the Taiping Rebellion, the famous Ching Dynasty reformists Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, and Sun Yat Sen, who in 1911 led the overthrow of the 2,000 year old imperial system and founded republican China, were all natives of the Pearl River Delta region. Another result was extensive emigration in the mid-19th century, not only to the U.S., but also to Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America.

The Pearl River Delta is formed where the West, North and East Rivers flow into the South China Sea. It has a subtropical climate and is about the same size as the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Guangzhou is its main city and Hong Kong is close by. Although some parts of Guangdong were settled two thousand years ago, much of the Pearl River Delta region rests on reclaimed land and alluvial soil, and was a frontier until as late as the 12th century.

In this small but unusually restless area lay the origins of Mary Bowen Wing's paternal grandparents, Lee Bo Wen and Mary Wong Hop Ching.

Nesting in Hostile Winds: The First Generation

Our first ancestor to come to the United States was Lee Bo Wen, Por-Por's paternal grandfather.

We believe that he came from Chikkai District in Guangdong Province, China, and that he was born in 1842. We know that he was an Hakka. More than likely, his family faced discrimination from the Cantonese, and was probably forced to relocate frequently. In contrast, most Chinese lived on the same land or village for many generations. Lee Bo Wen's migration to the United States was surely encouraged by these harsh realities.

The story is passed down that Lee Bo Wen came to the United States from China in 1854 at the young age of 12 years old. He was accompanied by an uncle, who dropped young Lee off and immediately returned to China. We know nothing of the whys and hows of this arrangement, or who took Lee under their care while here. We do know that he was one of the first Chinese immigrants to come to the U.S. Spurred by the discovery of gold in California in 1848, these early Chinese immigrants came to call the U.S. Gum Shan, "Gold Mountain."

The vast majority of Chinese (and European) immigrants to the U.S. in the 19th century never planned to permanently stay in this country. Most hoped to make as much money as possible as quickly as possible, and then to return home. For this reason, they came to be known as "sojourners."

The Chinese sojourners were rudely received in this country. With the notable exception of slavery, all of the laws that the white majority had imposed upon black people were applied to Chinese as well: No Chinese immigrant could become a citizen, and hence could not vote; they were subject to strict racial segregation in housing and employment; they were not allowed to testify in court, attend public schools, work for the government, own land, etc.

In California, white Americans, though themselves newly arrived, utilized racism to ensure their economic and cultural supremacy over the thousands of Indians and Mexicans native to California, as well as the many Latin Americans and Chinese who, like themselves, were attracted by gold, railroads, land and jobs.

California-style racism culminated in the first ever U.S. law forbidding any nationality from entering the U.S., the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the fierce anti-Chinese riots that swept the west in the late 1870s and 1880s.

Unfortunately, we have no record of how Lee Bo Wen or Mary Wong Ching survived these hostile winds. Given Lee's unusual youth and ethnicity, perhaps he was one of the few who always wished to make this country his home. In an almost exclusively male community, he was one of the rare Chinese able to marry and raise a family in the 19th century U.S. At age 32, he married Wong Hop Ching (Mary Wong Ching) in 1874 or 1875, probably by an arrangement made by the families in Chikkai. James, their first child, was born in 1876, and was followed by Frank in 1878, Edward, Mamie in 1888, and Anne. Our family has no recollection of Lee Bo Wen or Mary Wong Ching ever living anywhere except San Francisco before 1906.

So, at the zenith of anti-Chinese violence, Lee Bo Wen and Wong Hop Ching were nesting, right in the heart of anti-Chinese agitation—San Francisco!

Gramps/Tai-Gong: Lee Bo Wen

Unfortunately, we know little of the life and times of Lee Bo Wen until his grandchildren came of age enough to remember him in the 1910s. By then, Lee was well into his 70s.

Lee's Certificate of Residence of 1893 describes him as 5 feet, 3-3/4 inches tall, "Moor Dark" in complexion, with dark brown eyes and a large wart on the right side of his nose. He is universally remembered as kind, easygoing and softspoken. He was said to have a good sense of humor and to laugh easily.

Auntie E remembered him as slight in build, weighing perhaps 125 pounds. She said he had sharp features, wore "granny"-style glasses, and was blind in one eye. She recollected that he was "extremely personable, gentle-natured, conservative, non-drinker, non-smoker. He liked to putter [in the garden] with tools—amateur but willing—encouraged by a Caucasian neighbor."

The great-grandchildren remember him as an old man with "a long wispy white beard" whom they saw when they visited Fruitvale house from Vallejo. Auntie Pauline remembers him with a cane, "tap tapping his way." Auntie Do recalls that "he smoked a water pipe and played a stringed Chinese violin, which rested on his knee. It always sounded scratchy and non-melodious to me. He was a slight man, much older than my great-grandmother, whom I called Tai-Po."

Lee Bo Wen, circa 1938

Lee Bo Wen spoke Hakka and Sam Yup fluently, but apparently his Hakka became rusty for lack of use. The grandchildren remember that he regularly read Chinese newspapers. Considering that one must know about 3,000 Chinese characters to read a newspaper, this showed some level of education. No one seems sure

L. to r.: Lee Bo Wen, James Bowen, Grayce and Joyce Wye, circa 1928

whether or not he could write Chinese. Lee Bo Wen also spoke English quite well, and frequently spoke it to his grandchildren, especially the younger ones. At other times, the grandchildren spoke English to him, and he spoke Sam Yup back to them. However, Sam Yup was the dominant language in the Fruitvale household.

Lee was called "Grandpa" or "Gramps" by his grandchildren and "Tai-Gong" by his great-grandchildren.

According to their son James Bowen's testimony, his parents lived in the Kien Nam Building on Dupont Street (now Grant Avenue) at the time of his birth in 1876. He says a few months later, the family moved to the Sam Choy Building at 820 Dupont Street, third floor. The Certificates of Residence of Lee, Mary Wong Ching and James confirm that this was still their residence in 1894, and James recounts that his first son, Dewey, was also born there in 1898. However, James' second son was born at 1024 Pacific Avenue in 1900, as were Por-Por in 1902 and Auntie Grayce in 1904.

After the great Earthquake and Fire of 1906, the family relocated to 3302 E. 8th Street in Oakland. Lee Bo Wen lived with the children in a downstairs bedroom of this corner house, but managed to avoid most of the family tumult. Unlike his wife, who clearly ruled the household, Lee Bo Wen apparently saw his role as that of providing an inconspicuous kindness and support for the rest of the family.

Lee Bo Wen must have been quite hardy, as he worked well into his 70s. He must have participated in many types of work, and worked for many businesses over the years. However, the only occupation we know for sure was that he was a cannery worker and sometime recruiter ("straw boss") for canneries. He worked at the

Prince Cannery as well as Pacific Coast Canning, the largest Chinese-owned business in the East Bay. Owned by Lew Hing, this cannery employed as many 1,000 workers during high season—mainly Chinese, with a smattering of Latinos and whites—but shrunk back to 250 in off season. It was probably in preparation for high season that Lee Bo Wen became a recruiter for the cannery, a job which he apparently got because of his bilingual abilities.

According to Auntie Flo, her grandfather Lee was a very healthy person. When he would catch cold, however, she remembers that he would go out and buy ice cream, which somehow rid him of the cold. She remembers Grandpa paying her Canadian dimes for cutting his toenails, and telling her that Grandma was a "bad lady" because she smoked, swore and drank. Auntie also remembers him as "ingenious." One of his "inventions" was a bell he could ring in the kitchen from his distant downstairs bedroom to request aid from those upstairs.

Auntie Flo fondly recalls her grandfather taking her and her siblings on walks during the 1920s from the Fruitvale house, over the Fruitvale bridge, into the Fernside district of Alameda to pick peaches, apricots and loquats in what was then an undeveloped orchard. She remembers Grandpa picking apples and apricots from the Fruitvale house yard, and making preserves of them. Auntie E vividly recalled Grandpa bringing home "sweet" peaches.

Lee Bo Wen succumbed on September 23, 1931, at age 90 (Chinese 91). No cemetery in Oakland would bury Chinese, so he was interred at the Chinese cemetery in Colma. In 1949, James' children had him moved to Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland, where his remains are buried together with James, Mary Wong Ching and Susie Bowen, in a grave marked only by James' name.

A Mixed Marriage Made in Chikkai?

Somehow it has come down that Mary Wong Ching came from Chikkai District, Chik Hom Chu subdistrict, Village of Tin Ton. We believe Lee Bo Wen came from Chikkai as well. However, we do not know the names of his county and village.

Mary Wong Ching was a Sam Yup-speaking Cantonese, while Lee Bo Wen was Hakka—the Cantonese word for "guest people."

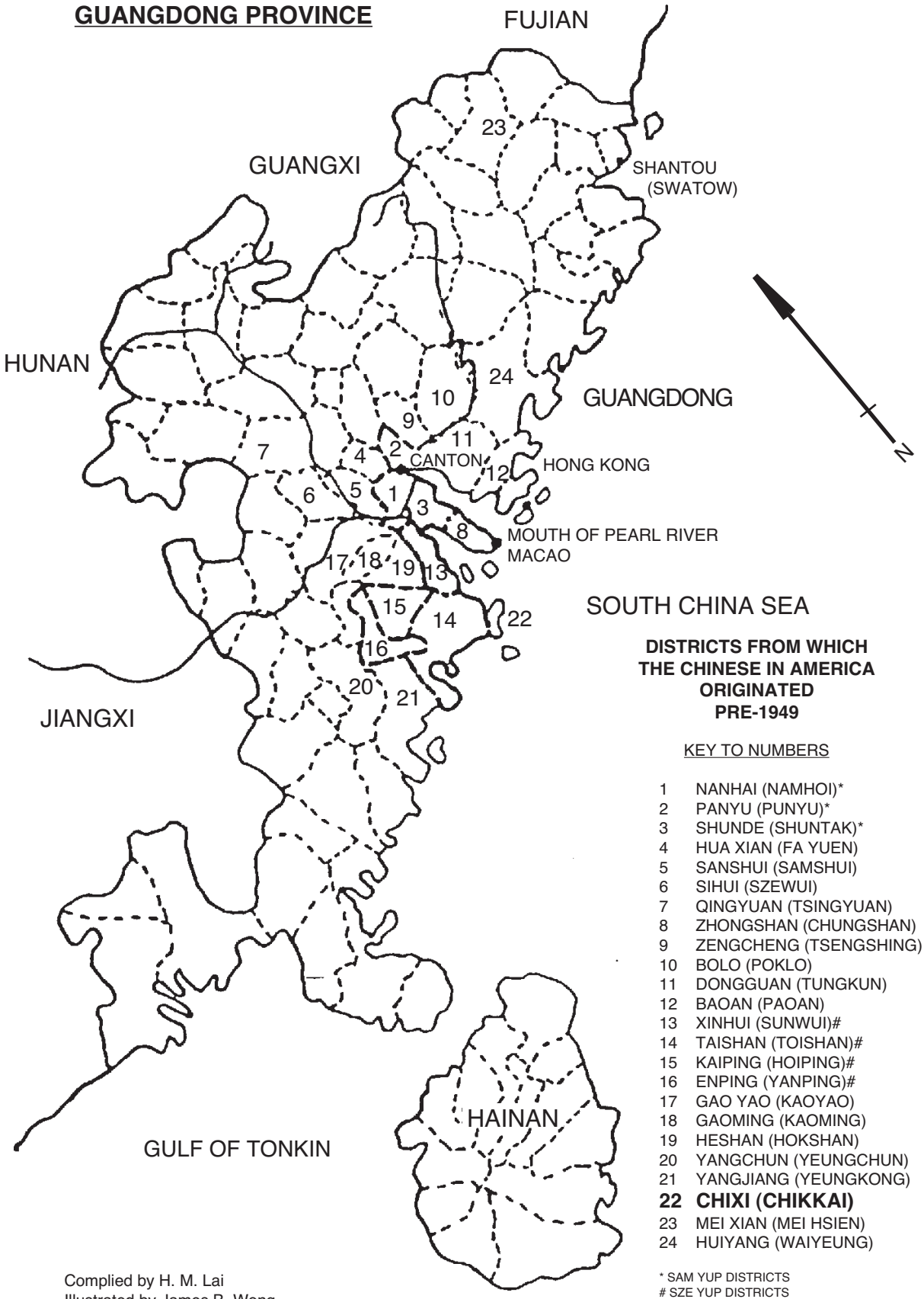
Some suggest that the Hakka were a nomadic tribe, but the Hakka claim to be Han people originally from Henan Province in north China. There are 56 officially recognized ethnic groups and nationalities within China, but the Han are by far the dominant, making up more than 90% of the population. However, the Han themselves consist of numerous language and dialect groups with distinctive cultures. The Hakka are one of these.

The Hakka are unique in that they were forced to evacuate their original Henan homeland in north China in the 4th century A.D. By the 13th century they entered northern Guangdong, and in about 1700 they came in large numbers to the Pearl River Delta region. They filled a population vacuum produced in 1684 when the Manchu government lifted its earlier order to evacuate 16 miles of Cantonese coastline to create a military buffer zone against hostile forces operating from Taiwan.

Historian Him Mark Lai's comments help to explain the emigration of Lee Bo Wen and Mary Wong Ching:

> In Sze Yup [Four Districts] the Hakka population grew rapidly. In Xinning [Cantonese Toishan] Hakka comprised about a third of the population. Friction between the Hakka and the Cantonese led to a bloody conflict in the Sze Yup area in the mid-nineteenth century. The fighting was especially fierce in Xinning [Toishan], where

GUANGDONG PROVINCE



DISTRICTS FROM WHICH THE CHINESE IN AMERICA ORIGINATED PRE-1949

KEY TO NUMBERS

1 NANHAI (NAMHOI)*
2 PANYU (PUNYU)*
3 SHUNDE (SHUNTAK)*
4 HUA XIAN (FA YUEN)
5 SANSHUI (SAMSHUI)
6 SIHUI (SZEWUI)
7 QINGYUAN (TSINGYUAN)
8 ZHONGSHAN (CHUNGSHAN)
9 ZENGCHENG (TSENGSHING)
10 BOLO (POKLO)
11 DONGGUAN (TUNGKUN)
12 BAOAN (PAOAN)
13 XINHUI (SUNWUI)#
14 TAISHAN (TOISHAN)#
15 KAIPING (HOIPING)#
16 ENPING (YANPING)#
17 GAO YAO (KAOYAO)
18 GAOMING (KAOMING)
19 HESHAN (HOKSHAN)
20 YANGCHUN (YEUNGCHUN)
21 YANGJIANG (YEUNGKONG)
22 CHIXI (CHIKKAI)
23 MEI XIAN (MEI HSIEN)
24 HUIYANG (WAIYEUNG)

* SAM YUP DISTRICTS
\# SZE YUP DISTRICTS
SAM YUP, SZE YUP, AND CHUNGSHAN DISTRICTS ARE SHOWN IN HEAVY OUTLINE.

Complied by H. M. Lai
Illustrated by James B. Wong

REV. AUG. 1990

> the Hakkas were displaced from most of the territory and forced to retreat into the small enclave of [Cantonese Chikkai]. . . .The economic dislocation caused by this conflict was a major factor impelling emigration of Sze Yup [and Hakka] people abroad.

So fierce was this civil war that Chikkai was severed from Toishan and made a separate administrative district dominated by Hakka. The Hakka population of Toishan thus fell from about 33% to less than 0.5%. Chikkai is only 92 square miles in size, and in the 1980s had 28,170 residents in its numerous villages. (In 1968, Chikkai was reincorporated to Toishan as a township.)

Lee Bo Wen emigrated to the U.S. at the age of twelve in 1854, in the midst of this turmoil. In 1868, the Hakka were soundly defeated by the Sze Yup and forced to retreat en masse to Chikkai. By then, there were few Sze Yup left in Chikkai, and even fewer Sam Yup. And, if anything, the Sam Yup antagonism toward the Hakka has historically been even greater than that of the Sze Yup. Yet, in 1874, the Sam Yup Mary Wong Ching immigrated to the U.S., apparently to become Lee's wife. Surely such a match was somewhat eased by the fact that Lee Bo Wen gained status from being overseas. Still, it is extraordinary that embattled Chikkai was apparently the place where a marriage match was struck between the Hakka Lee and the Sam Yup Wong.

What's in a Name (1)?

LEE BO WEN 李保雲

LEE WING SHUI 李永瑞

LEE SEK BO 李石寶

Plenty, especially for Chinese in the United States. In China, names are considered central to each family's legacy, history, and status, not to speak of the passing down of property. But in the United States, Chinese names have been inverted, falsified, converted and re-converted to the English alphabet, Americanized, and even bought and sold.

This is primarily a result of anti-Chinese laws and bias that for more than a century rendered many of our ancestors illegal and semi-legal. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 produced a flourishing black market in which would-be immigrants purchased documents from the few legal residents or their relatives, and assumed their names once they arrived here. Moreover, U.S. immigration officials were ignorant or unconcerned that Chinese place their family names first and so inverted thousands of names in official records. Compounding this is the inconsistency of rendering Chinese characters into the English alphabet. Consequently, many Chinese have lost their original family names, and their Chinese-American names are often a source of rich and dizzying history. The Bowen name is a case in point.

Traditionally, Chinese names are structured with the family name first, the second name being a generation name (the male siblings share one name and the female siblings share another) and the third name being a given name.

Our earliest U.S. ancestor's name has come down to us as Lee Bowen (Por-Por's grandfather); then we have James and Susie Bowen (Por-Por's parents); Mary Bowen (Por-Por's maiden name), etc. Naturally, many of us have assumed that Lee (pronounced "Lay") was

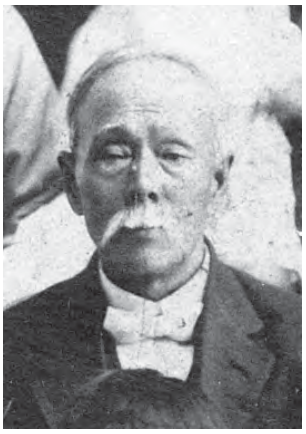
the family name, and that Bowen was a contraction of Bo Wen. In other words, that Lee Bowen was actually Lee Bo Wen.

However, this explanation was apparently disproved when Por-Por, Auntie E, and Auntie Do, our best family historians, informed us that Lee Bowen's real name was actually Lee Sek Bo. Their story was that a white family doctor suggested Americanizing the family name when the grandchildren entered school (circa 1910) to disguise our Chinese origins and thus limit discrimination. Thus "Bowen" was thought to be an Americanization, using Bo in Lee Sek Bo as its root.

Old documents provided partial confirmation of this theory. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 not only blocked the immigration of Chinese, it also required Chinese in this country to periodically obtain an official Certificate of Residence, something akin to a pass in apartheid South Africa. Por-Por's grandfather's 1894 Certificate, preserved by Auntie E, names him as Lee Bow. This confirmed the "Bo" in Lee Sek Bo and Lee Bowen.

We then discovered James Bowen's 1937 testimony in which James refers to his father as "Lee Wing Shui also named Bo Wen." This solved the origins of Bowen as the contraction of Bo Wen. Yet it also produced two new puzzles: a new name that no one had ever heard before appears—Lee Wing Shui—and the name that the best informed of us had thought was correct—Lee Sek Bo—is not mentioned at all!

My friend, Agnes Chan, who translated James Bowen's testimony and is an expert in Chinese history, informs me that it is common in China for a male to have three different names. Everyone has a birth name. Secondly, those with scholarly aspirations, or who are able to afford a tutor or to enter school, are often given "scholar names" by their teacher. This is usually conferred at an early age, say 6 or 7. Finally, when a male comes to adulthood, he often chooses a name for himself. The surname remains constant in these names, the second and third names change. It is common for all three names to be in use, to different people, at the same time.



Lee Bo Wen, 1912

James carefully recorded his father's name as "Lee Wing Shui also named Bo Wen." Since Wing Shui is the first name stated, Agnes thinks it was probably Lee's preferred name, perhaps the one he gave himself. And because James used the Chinese character "ming" for what is translated above as "also named," she thinks Bo Wen is probably the birth name. Lee Bowen must indeed have come from Lee Bo Wen.

We still do not know when the family took on the name Bowen. Auntie E's birth certificate of 1907 uses the name Bowen. Perhaps it was adopted when they bought the Fruitvale house, to avoid racial covenants against Chinese ownership?

At any rate, our Chinese-American surname, Bowen, is a contraction of Lee Bo Wen's birth generation and given names, and our Chinese family name, Lee, was conferred by Lee Bo Wen on his children as their Chinese-American middle names (James Lee Bowen, Mamie Lee Bowen, etc.).

Mary Wong Ching: A Woman Ahead of Her Time

Mary Wong Ching, 1894

Por-Por's grandmother was born Wong Hop Ching in 1861 in the Chikkai district of Guangdong, Chik Hom Chu subdistrict, village of Tin Ton. We believe that she was matchmade with Lee Bo Wen, and at the age of only 13 (14 by Chinese count) was sent to the U.S. to be married to him in 1875. She bore children immediately: Lee Quoon Lin (James Lee Bowen) in 1876, Lee Quoon Kwai (Frank Lee Bowen) in 1878, Lee Quoon Luk (Edward Lee Bowen), Lee Shui Shum (Mamie Lee Bowen) in 1888, and finally, Lee Shui Ling (Anne Bowen).

Mary Wong Ching's Certificate of Residence of 1894 describes her as 5 foot, 3-1/2 inches tall and of medium complexion. She was considered an unusual beauty and paid great attention to her appearance, dress and jewelry. Mary Wong Ching's 1894 Certificate also states that she is "Native Born," meaning born in the U.S. While this possibility should not be completely discounted, we believe it is inaccurate.

Por-Por remembers that "Grandmother never worked. She spent her time visiting her daughters or going across the street to the other Chinese family of the neighborhood to play cards (Chinese cards, long and narrow, about 1 inch by 4 inches, and black) or games, sometimes until 11 or 12 o'clock at night. She loved to garden, grew flowers of all kinds (especially baby roses), and raised chickens in cages in the backyard. She also liked animals, cats and dogs, and had a cat and small white and yellow birds of her own. Grandmother was the only one in the family who smoked cigarettes. She would go out to water the garden and call to the kids to bring cigarettes out

to her, and sometimes a cup of tea. She generally stayed up late and got up late, often having the kids cook her something to eat at 11 at night."

Women constituted less than 10% of the Chinese population in 19th century America. Many were prostitutes or semi-slaves brought over to service the men. By managing to raise and educate her five children, Mary was already a most unusual woman.

Since Mary came to this country at such an early age, had no relatives here, came bound to marry a man 19 years older who had already been in this male-dominated strange new land for 20 years, immediately bore five children, and apparently never held a paying job, she might have lived a rather hemmed-in, dependent life. But Mary's spirit moved in other ways.

"Old Fashioned"

Por-Por says her grandmother was "very old fashioned," meaning she observed many Chinese customs. "She lit punks at temples, and had a shelf at home where she would light punks. On certain dates of the month or year, she would light the punks, sometimes also offering food, or flowers. She would put a cooked chicken on a plate, and fruit, like oranges and bananas, on a table if the shelf was too small. Later we would eat it for dinner."

According to Por-Por, Mary Wong Ching was also old-fashioned in her ideas about weddings: "She wanted a dowry—so many bottles of whiskey, so many wedding cakes, all Chinese stuff, lots of money." This adherence to custom later led Mary Wong Ching to temporarily disown Por-Por for eloping with Gong-Gong. This rift was not bridged until Por-Por produced her first child (Auntie Do), and Mary Wong Ching wanted to make sure she could actively great-grandmother her.

Lady Hop Sing Tong

But Mary Wong Ching was far from old-fashioned in other ways. Mary was the unquestioned boss in the Lee Bo Wen household. (See "Supreme Court.")

There was much more. Por-Por remembers her "grandmother had a boyfriend who would occasionally visit her, but more often she would visit him. They called him my 'big brother's godfather,' but they just said that to make it seem more respectable. He was really Grandmother's boyfriend. She used to bring a couple of the grandkids with her when she would go to visit him. This boyfriend and Grandmother would smoke something in a pipe together, which we knew we were not supposed to mention, because it was something illegal. I think it must have been opium. The grandkids would be put to sleep on a mat on the floor when it got late, because Grandmother would usually stay until midnight or so, smoking with her boyfriend."

Mary Wong Ching had another boyfriend who Por-Por was told was "a friend of the family" and who would sometimes stay at the Fruitvale house overnight. "He would come and go, staying overnight more and more often." Finally, Mary Wong Ching moved to San Jose with this boyfriend, and lived there for at least eight years. "Maybe my grandmother missed him when he moved to San Jose, because that was when she went to live in San Jose also." At the time, Por-Por remembers, Mary's departure was explained as necessary in order to calm her asthma, but at least the older grandchildren knew better. This man's name was Joe Gei Sue, but everyone called him Billy Joe.

When Por-Por's mother took seriously ill, Mary Wong Ching's three youngest grandchildren, Henrye, Florence, and Jennye, went to live with her and Billy Joe on Cleveland Street in San Jose Chinatown. Also living with them was Jue Tong, Billy Joe's son. Auntie Flo, Uncle Henrye and Auntie Jaye lived in San Jose for seven years before their grandma and they moved back to Oakland.

By this time, Mary Wong Ching had apparently mellowed in her approach to childraising. Auntie Jaye "thought the world of Grand," was never spanked and received few harsh words. She and Auntie Flo admired and learned from Grand's serenity, grace, manners, tasteful clothes, and ability to get along with people. They

remember Grand as a woman of great class and affection, who appreciated the best in clothes, food, and jewelry, and who never used the rod on them. They also remember Billy Joe affectionately, one of the highlights being when he measured Flo and Jaye's feet and went out and bought them roller skates. He apparently worked long hours at the Chinese lottery, and never accompanied Mary and her grandchildren on her visits to San Francisco or Fruitvale.

In San Jose, Grandma spoke Sam Yup to Billy Joe who conversed in Sze Yup, each apparently understanding enough of the other's dialect to get along. She spoke English and Sam Yup to her grandchildren, who in turn spoke to her mainly in English. Auntie Flo remembers that Grandma got along perfectly well in English on buses, in stores and on trains. She remembers that Mary Wong Ching loved the Chinese opera, traveling to San Francisco Chinatown almost every weekend to see it. On these occasions, they would stay at the Fruitvale house. Despite her unusual marital behavior, Mary Wong Ching was treated as one of the "belles of Chinatown."

One explanation is that, early on, Mary Wong Ching apparently became associated with the notorious Hop Sing Tong. Billy Joe, and possibly her previous boyfriend, was a member of the Hop Sing Tong and worked in a gambling parlor in San Jose. Mary may have been one of the first and only female members of this virtually all-male brotherhood. There is even a family remembrance of Mary Wong Ching being a "pistol-packing mama." Her association with the tong must have been powerful protection, as she was never chastised by family or community for her extramarital affairs. This at a time when even divorce was considered scandalous and often led to women being disowned and isolated.

While living in San Jose, Mary Wong Ching visited home frequently, including long stays during the summer, and her power there never diminished. The grandchildren used to whisper to themselves, "What if Grand were here?"

In approximately 1922, Mary moved back to her family in Fruitvale. We are not sure why, but Auntie Flo says that even though

Mary Wong Ching with granddaughters Florence (in her arms) and Katie, 1912

Jue Tong remained close to the family and even lived in her house for awhile after she married, she never saw Billy Joe again, though Auntie Jaye says Billy was still alive when she and her grandma moved back to Oakland.

Thereafter, Auntie Flo remembers Grandma taking her on the train and then the ferry to San Francisco almost every Saturday to visit Grandma's nephew Harry Wong and his family, who owned a dry goods store on the Italian side of Broadway, on Stockton Street. Harry's wife, Lena (who was the sister of Auntie Betty's mom), and Grandma would go to the Chinese opera, and the kids would go off to the Verdi Theater to watch vaudeville and movies staged for kids.

Mary is only vaguely remembered by her great-grandchildren, as she died November 27, 1927, at the age of 66, in Oakland.

Mary Wong Ching, circa 1920's

"Supreme Court"

by Elsye Bowen Won

Grandmother was 5'4" from a good family background. STRICT DISCIPLINARIAN. Labeled "Supreme Court," her word was "LAW." Elegantly mannered, recognized beauty of her day. Noted and famed for her graceful carriage and meticulous grooming. Spent hours to prepare herself to perfect grooming for banquets and parties. Loved and wore tasteful jewelry.

All household and family members, including grandchildren, respected but feared her matriarchal position. Rigidly devoted and dedicated to raising children properly. Did not spare the rod to spoil children. Gave constant and repeated heavy lip service.

Spoke English. Traveled around on trains, ferries, street cars without difficulty. Very hard on discipline, exercised to the point of instilling childish fear and resentment. Reminiscent of her era when the establishment was the establishment.

Yet there were genuinely tender moments as the grandchildren gathered about her for singing—"I Love You, California" was one of her special favorites—or talk about school progress, or storytelling, she to them. Also sang Chinese folk melodies and legends from her favorite chair. She rewarded good behavior with stashed away goodies and treats. This was rare, she being the strict disciplinarian, but when it occurred, it was shared with mutual pleasure.

Grandma loved gardening. Although usually late-to-bed and a late riser, she would sometimes arise early and could be found in the garden puttering even before her morning toilette.

One of her pet luxuries (at the expense of her innocent, unsuspecting grandchildren) was to be spot "pummeled" or massaged, gently and soothingly, by two or more children conveniently draped about her as she lay prone in bed. She continually gave orders to

coordinate the pummeling to her maximum comfort and relaxation. For this the children were sometimes rewarded. However, the children were not at times adverse to using Grandmother as a punching bag in retaliation for a previous reprimand or just out of sheer childish resentment for being held captive during playtime.

She smoked rolled Bull Durham cigarettes rather than packaged cigarettes. These were pre-rolled and stocked by the cigar-box-full by dutiful daughters-in-law and later grandchildren were trained to follow the practice. Packaged cigarettes were not popular in her day. It was the custom to blend and "roll your own" for size and maximum enjoyment. She would be considered a heavy smoker in this day.

Her drinking usually occurred at meal time. She took straight whiskey shots, sipped with great connoisseur delight and authority. On family occasion dinners, members were held captive at the table to sit through her long dissertations about many and varied subjects. Children were to sit upright and give total attention and were not excused until she had completed her "lectures." Some older and wiser children would manage to slip away from the table before Grandmother got wound up. In short, her pleasure of drink produced a great flow of words which were directed to all. She being the head and master ruled supreme.

She watched as the children traipsed off to school in strict and orderly fashion and regimentation, but as soon as the corner was reached and turned, all hell and ranks broke loose as Grandma proudly trusted her charges to proper and ladylike behavior en route to school some eight blocks from home base!

We were given occasional "trunk showings"—four to five old cedar Chinese trunks held her treasured, richly embroidered wedding robes and skirts, fancy perfumes, fans, slippers, other fancy attire of her young days, all neatly folded and exhibited to us with care.

What's in a Name (2)?

Por-Por's grandmother was generally known as Mary Wong Ching. According to James' testimony, her full Chinese name was Wong Hop Ching. There are two different Chinese characters pronounced Wong. Wong Hop Ching was an "Ai Oo" Wong—so described because the written character resembles a stomach (Ai Oo in Chinese).

Traditionally, Chinese women do not change their names when they marry. Probably this is why, even after Americanization, Wong Hop Ching was known as Mary Wong Ching and not Mary Bowen. One person did call her Mrs. Bowen; ironically, this person was Jue Tong, the son of her paramour Billy Joe.

Chinese women traditionally take on a second name when they marry. This is done by placing the word Shee, which means "married to" after a woman's surname and before her husband's surname. Mary Wong Ching was therefore also known as Wong Shee Lee—Wong married to Lee. Often this is shortened to Wong Shee, which would roughly mean Wong who is married, or, perhaps, Mrs. Wong.

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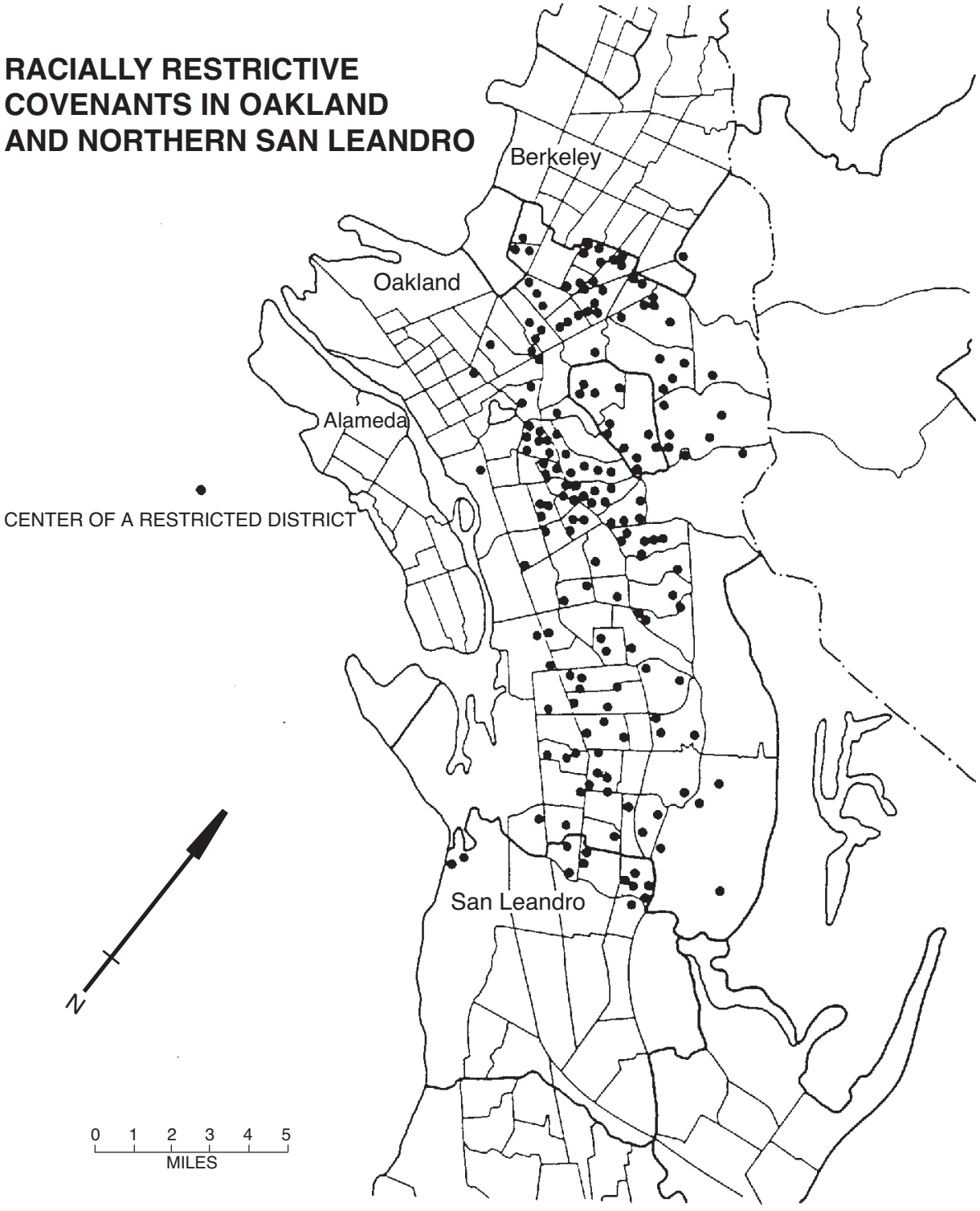
PART II
FROM LEE TO BOWEN

Mary Wong Ching and Lee Bo Wen Family, 1912

RACIALLY RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS IN OAKLAND AND NORTHERN SAN LEANDRO



(SOURCE: WESTERN TITLE GUARANTY COMPANY)

1960 CENSUS TRACTS

A New Start in Oakland: The Second and Third Generations

In 1906, Lee Bo Wen was 64 years old and Mary Wong Ching was 45. Their children were all adults, married and with children of their own. The extended family lived together in San Francisco Chinatown, and fear of harassment made outside ventures rare.

Then the terrible San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906 changed their lives forever. Chinatown was entirely consumed, and the Lee family was evacuated by the authorities to Alameda, a bay island city adjacent to Oakland. But, unlike most evacuees, the family never returned to San Francisco. At Frank Bowen's urging, the family searched for a new home in Oakland.

Today Oakland is residentially the most integrated city in the U.S., but at the turn of the century it was just the opposite. Rabidly anti-Chinese politicians had seized control of the city in 1877. This despite the fact that the Chinese had built the railroad that had made Oakland the state's principal rail terminus in the 1860s, and had also constructed Temescal (1869) and Chabot (1875), dams which were crucial to the city's water supply.

The city's establishment was horrified by the prospect of what the *Oakland Tribune* called "the hordes of Chinese" who, they warned, would "overrun" the town after the 1906 earthquake. In fact, between 100,000 and 150,000 San Franciscans were evacuated to Oakland, but few were Chinese. About 2,000 San Francisco Chinese stayed in Oakland, swelling the Chinese population from a mere 950 in 1900 to 3,069 in 1910.

Racially restrictive housing covenants (legal until 1948) barred non-whites from most neighborhoods. Nonetheless, the family somehow regrouped at 3302 East 8th Street, located in the lily-white Fruitvale District. For the first time, the family lived outside of the all-Chinese enclave of San Francisco Chinatown, helping to break the color barrier in notoriously redneck Oakland.

Surely the elder Bowens hoped that this leap into the mainstream would provide new opportunities for their family. It was only after the move that James Bowen decided to cut off his cherished, almost hip-length queue. And here, too, we believe the family Americanized its name to Bowen. As Auntie E put it, this was a "new beginning, from scratch."

#1 Son: James Bowen

James Bowen, circa 1929

James Bowen, Por-Por's father, recorded in his testimony that he was born Lee Quoon Lin in "1876, Ching Dynasty, Quong Jui 2nd year, on the fourth month, 7th day, in the Kien Nam Building on Dupont Street [now Grant Avenue]." He was the first child of Lee Bo Wen and Wong Hop Ching. Somewhere along the line, he adopted or was given three other names: Lee Fat Wah, Lee Ji Shut, and James Bowen.

James was born at the very height of anti-Chinese agitation in San Francisco. As a child, he must have experienced many violent attacks on his community.

Somehow James still managed to thrive. Although barred from public schools, he learned to fluently speak, read and write both English and Chinese (Sam Yup). More than likely, he got his education in one of the church schools in Chinatown. At that time, literacy was rare in China, and still a mark of good education in the United States, so James' biliteracy was an unusual achievement. James also spoke elementary Hakka.

James was probably the most serious and traditional of his siblings. He allowed his hair to grow to waist length and wore it in a traditional queue, which he retained long after even his father had his cut off. And he was the only male child in the family to have an arranged marriage.

At age 20, James was matchmade with Susie Wong of Monterey, and they were married in 1896. Their children came

quickly. Starting with Kum Moon (Dewey) in 1898 and ending with Oi Jun (Jennye) in 1914, they had three boys and five girls. In 1900, the family suffered the tragic death of their second son, Kum Chuen, after only three weeks of life.

James followed the custom of eldest son living with and caring for his parents. In fact, until the family moved to Oakland following the 1906 earthquake, all of the men and their families lived with their parents and unmarried sisters.

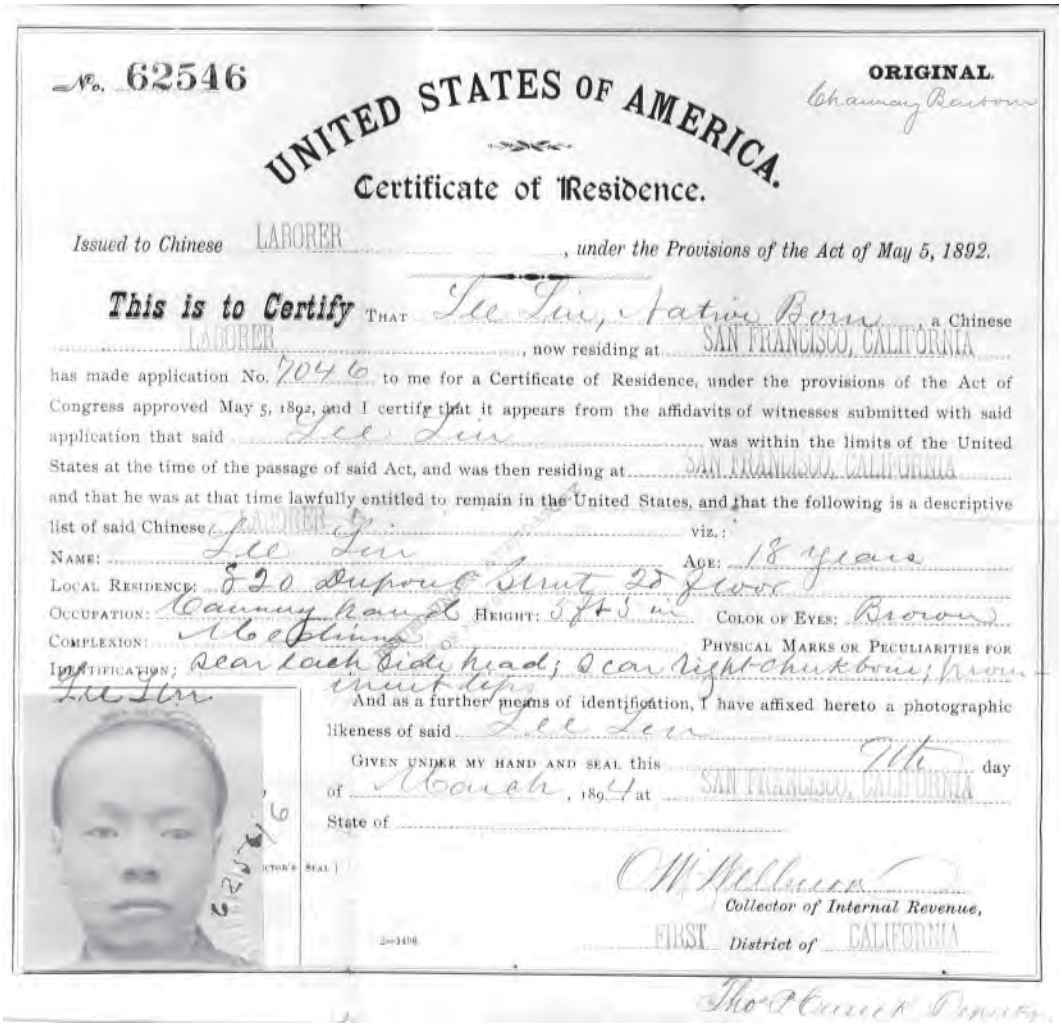
Auntie E said her dad "never raised his voice at them, loved kids, and was openly affectionate with the children and his wife." James and Susie spoke English to their children, mixed Sam Yup and English with each other, and Sam Yup to James' folks. The older kids called James "Dad or Daddy"; later the younger siblings sometimes called him "Daddy-O," the popular slang of the day.

In 1914, Susie became seriously ill. James' children remember their dad was very attentive toward his sick wife, moving her into dimmer light to spare her unwanted glare, and that he would still refer to her years after her death in 1918.

When James came home from work, the kids would vie to get him his slippers, pipe and tobacco. They would eagerly search his pockets until they found the lifesavers he brought home for them every day. On Tuesdays and Fridays, he would scan the newspapers for grocery bargains, and go to the markets on 6th and 10th Streets to do the family shopping.

Despite his good education, James' economic opportunities were extremely limited to what were then considered "Chinese jobs." James' testimony says "I first worked in the cannery and then as janitor in an American drug store for 7 or 8 years." This drug store was Bowerman's Pharmacy located on Post Street in San Francisco. James commuted to this job by taking the streetcar to the ferry, and paid $2.25 per month for the ferry ticket.

After Bowerman's, he worked at the Cliff House out at the beach in San Francisco as a kitchen helper, washing pots for $35/



No. 62546

ORIGINAL.

Chauncey Barbour

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Certificate of Residence.

Issued to Chinese LABORER, *under the Provisions of the Act of May 5, 1892.*

This is to Certify THAT Lee Lin, Native Born, a Chinese LABORER, now residing at SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA has made application No. 7046 to me for a Certificate of Residence, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved May 5, 1892, and I certify that it appears from the affidavits of witnesses submitted with said application that said Lee Lin was within the limits of the United States at the time of the passage of said Act, and was then residing at SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA and that he was at that time lawfully entitled to remain in the United States, and that the following is a descriptive list of said Chinese LABORER viz.:

NAME: Lee Lin AGE: 18 years

LOCAL RESIDENCE: 820 Dupont Street 2d floor

OCCUPATION: Cannery hand HEIGHT: 5 ft 5 in COLOR OF EYES: Brown

COMPLEXION: Medium PHYSICAL MARKS OR PECULIARITIES FOR IDENTIFICATION: Scar each side head; Scar right cheekbone; brown inner lips

Lee Lin

And as a further means of identification, I have affixed hereto a photographic likeness of said Lee Lin

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL this 7th day of March, 1894 at SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

State of

O. W. Wellmore

Collector of Internal Revenue,

FIRST *District of* CALIFORNIA

Tho P Currick Deputy

James Bowen's Certificate of Residence, 1894

month. He used to bring home butter, eggs, and meat. Auntie E said, "We were poor, but we ate good." Auntie also remembered that at one time James worked "in a junk yard with Third Uncle [Edward], sorting rags and washing bottles."

James loved music and was adept at playing a Chinese stringed instrument. His taste, however, ran to American, not Chinese music, including World War I songs, which he regularly played in the evenings with the singing accompaniment of the rest of the family. Auntie Flo remembers some of his favorites as "Johnny Get Your Gun," "Roses of Picardy," and "I Love You, California."

His "flowing and artistic script" and beautiful calligraphy is universally remembered by his children and grandchildren. When

Por-Por married and moved to Vallejo, her father wrote to her regularly, for many years once a week. Por-Por remembers his letters to her well. He would describe any unusual events in his life, and ask simple questions about hers. According to the translator, James' Chinese writing showed excellent grammar, a wide vocabulary, and a mature calligraphy—highly unusual for a Chinese American.

James was called "Granddaddy" by his grandchildren (not Gong-Gong) who remember him well. For years he went to Auntie Flo's house in Oakland Chinatown every day to take care of her kids Sharyn and Rally. His granddaughter Joyce Wye Mar, Auntie Grayce's daughter, remembers James "rocking them to sleep, often humming." Auntie Flo named her daughter Sharyn Lynn, after James' Chinese given name Lin. Flo's son Rally later did the same.

Grandson Leland Wing's "most vivid memory of him is his grandchildren taking turns 'riding horsey'. He would sit in a chair, cross his legs and rock the top leg while one of the kids would sit on his foot and hang on to his leg. My other clear memory is of his letters to Por. He had beautiful script-like handwriting, and would begin each letter with 'My Dearest (or Darling) Daughter' and sign off with 'Your Loving Father'."

Joyce remembers Granddaddy James came to the extended family's every Sunday gathering at Auntie Grayce's house at 564-62nd Street in Oakland. "I remember we were gathered together on such a Sunday, December 7, 1941, and heard the bombing of Pearl Harbor." Like others, she recalls James as "gentle/kind"—and as an avid Mah Jong player.

Granddaughter Dolores Wong's "memory of him is that of a kind and gentle man, square in face, stocky in build, who walked with a slight limp. He often allowed me to touch his face, especially when he needed a shave. . . The greatest thrill of my childhood would be a trip to Fruitvale. . . and the biggest treat of my visits would be a ride on the train to Chinatown with my granddaddy, who always held my hand carefully. Once arrived at the Oakland station, he would buy me a hot mug of milk with sugar and a doughnut. I can

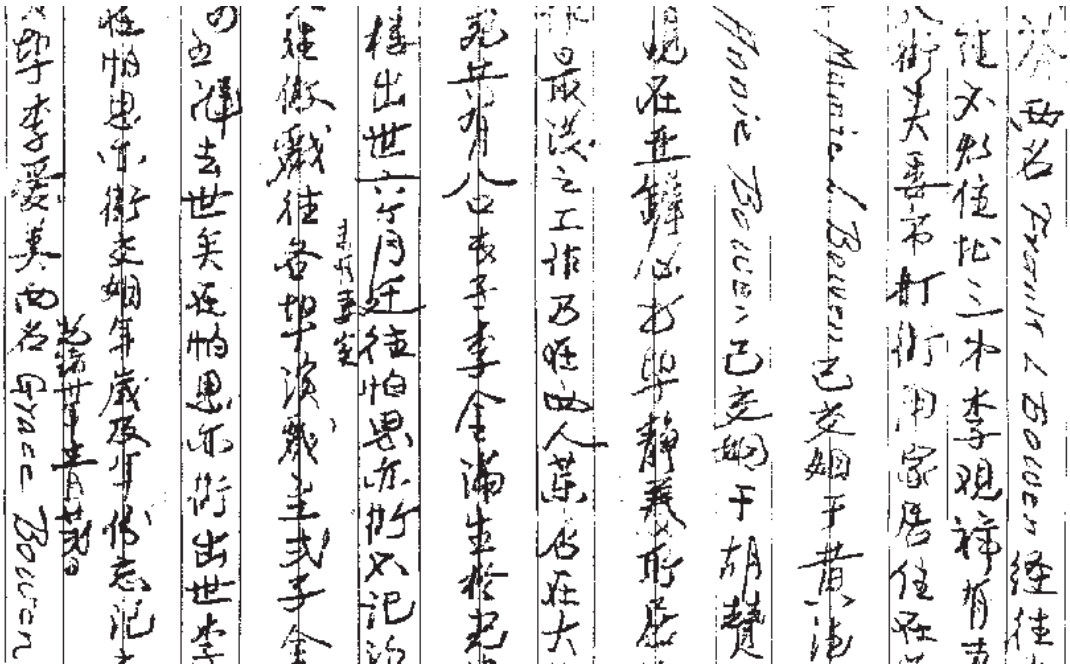
James Bowen, 1937

still feel the taste in my mouth."

James suffered various ailments to his leg and heart as he aged. Auntie E preserved numerous Chinese medicinal prescriptions written by James and apparently designed to cure or relieve him of these problems. According to my translator friend, these prescriptions covered a wide range of medicines and were extremely complex and detailed. She believes it demonstrates the knowledge of a lay practitioner.

In about 1936, soon after the birth of granddaughter Sharyn, James left (sold?) the Fruitvale house and moved in with Auntie Flo, her husband Bing, and children Rally and Sharyn. Auntie Flo does not remember him holding any jobs after that time. For the rest of his life, James stayed with his Oakland-based children, moving from house to house over the years. In 1937 he wrote the "testimony," preserved these many years by Auntie E, that is the source of much family history.

James died on August 24, 1942, at age 66, apparently of heart problems, and was buried at Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland.


Section of James Bowen's Testimony, 1937

What's in a Name (3)?

LEE QUOON LIN 李觀蓮

LEE FAT WAH 李發華

WONG CHOI KIU 王財嬌

James Bowen, like his Dad, assumed three names. Lee Quoon Lin was his birth name. Lee Fat Wah and Lee Ji Shut were his other two Chinese names. According to Auntie Flo, whenever he would order out from a bakery or restaurant in Chinatown, he give his name as Lee Fat Wah, so apparently this was his preferred Chinese name.

James' generation, the second in the United States, also was the first to have separate Chinese names and American names. Later in life, Auntie Flo recalls that he was called Jim by most of his friends and relatives.

Interestingly, all of the second generation Bowens, male and female, were given Lee as their middle name and Bowen as their surname, thus preserving their true surname as their middle name. They were, in order of birth:

Lee Quoon Lin—James Lee Bowen (1876-1942)
Lee Quoon Kwai—Frank Lee Bowen (1878-1968)
Lee Quoon Luk—Edward Lee Bowen (18?-1935)
Lee Shui Shum—Mamie Lee Bowen (1888-1920)
Lee Shui Ling—Anne Lee Bowen

Susie Wong Bowen, James' wife, was born Wong Choy Kiu. Unlike her mother-in-law, Mary Wong Ching, Susie was a "Sam Wak" Wong: the Chinese character for her surname Wong is the one with three strokes.

After marriage, of course, she was also known as Wong Shee Lee or Wong Shee. However, she was generally known by her American name, Susie.

Susie Wong Bowen

Susie Wong Bowen, Por-Por's mother, also came from a family with long roots in the United States. She was born in Monterey, somewhere near where the aquarium now stands, on March 3, 1877. Her Chinese name was Wong Choy Kiu. James records her father to be Wong Shou Quan who died in June of 1930, and Susie is said to have one older and one younger sister, and a younger brother who died a few years after his father.

Susie Wong Bowen, 1912

At age 19, she was matchmade to James Bowen, and they were married in 1896. Susie spoke Sam Yup and English, though apparently was considerably more comfortable in Sam Yup.

James and Susie proceeded quickly to raise a family. Dewey 7/15/98-9/1/36; Lee Kum Chuen 1900-1900 (died in infancy); Mary 3/31/02–; Grayce 12/21/04–10/14/94; Elsye 9/21/07-3/18/94; Henrye 9/9/09-4/15/83; Florence 4/21/12–; Jennye 9/12/14–.

Por-Por remembers her mom as being really strict about making sure the girls learned to cook, sew and otherwise take care of the house from an early age.

Por-Por knew her mother's brother and one of her sisters. This sister had a family in San Francisco Chinatown, a whole bunch (Por-Por says six or eight) of kids living in the back of a store. This aunt "taught her kids to perform, so that guides would bring an audience, and the kids would sing and dance for the tourists—copying Charlie Chaplin, with moustaches and canes." According to James, both of Susie's sisters visited China, and one lived there for some 20 years.

Susie had a stroke in 1914 and needed constant care for the rest of her life. She developed a brain tumor which blinded her left eye, and suffered strokes and seizures, which left her paralyzed on the left side.

Luckily, she had trained the older girls, Por-Por (then 12) and Auntie Grayce (10), and they were able to take over the household chores. In addition, Por-Por remembers they had to feed and bathe her, help her sit by her bed, and provide all-around care for her. The three younger children, Henrye, Flo and Jennye, were sent to live with their grandmother in San Jose.

Susie was treated by "American" doctors, and died on November 13, 1918.

Auntie E, who was seven at the time, remembered being scared of the room where her mother died. She said Susie "was taken to a funeral parlor in San Francisco and laid on a slab wearing white. There was a mat in front of the slab for people to kneel on. The kids followed grandmother's instructions to place raw ginger on their mother's forehead. They had to do something with a hot skillet, too. The grandmother warned that the mother would 'come back and haunt you' otherwise."

Susie was originally buried in the Chinese cemetery in Colma, and her remains were later moved by her children to Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland, where she is now buried in the same grave as her husband James.

What's in a Name (4)?

James and Susie Bowen retained the practice of naming their children Bowen as their Chinese-American surname and of also giving each of them Chinese names. Their children, in order of birth, were named:

Dewey Lee Bowen—Lee Kum Moon
Lee Kum Chuen
Mary Lee Bowen—Lee Oi Kuen
Grayce Lee Bowen—Lee Oi Mei
Elsye Bowen—Lee Chung Loy
Henrye Lee Bowen—Lee Kum Chou
Florence Bowen—Lee Oi Fung
Jennye Lee Bowen—Lee Oi Jun

Lee Kum Chuen died as an infant, and was never given an American name as far as we know. Auntie E has an unusual Chinese name. Her sisters follow the traditional pattern of having the same middle name (in this case, Oi), but her name is Chung Loy. This means something like "turn it around." She was given this name because her parents wanted another boy, after having lost their second son and then bearing two girls in a row. This expressed wish was granted: their next child was Henrye! Apparently such names as Chung Loy are fairly common in China, one aspect of its male centeredness.

By the way, the habit of calling the Bowen sisters by the first initial of their last name (M, E, Jaye, etc.) originated to make the names easier for young children (for the 4th and 5th generation) to pronounce. Also, the unusual spellings of Henrye, Grayce, Elsye and Jennye were adult innovations, not birth given.

Mary Bowen Wing

Mary, 1912

Mary Bowen Wing, my Por-Por, was born on March 31, 1902 in San Francisco at 4 a.m. at 1024 Pacific Street. Her father, James, records this date on the Chinese calendar as "Ching Quong Jui 28th year, 2nd month, 23rd day." She was the third child of James and Susie Bowen, the second to survive infancy and the first daughter.

After the 1906 earthquake and fire, Mary was evacuated to Alameda with her extended family, which then settled at 3302 E. 8th Street in the Fruitvale district of Oakland.

The Fruitvale house had four "bedrooms" separated by partitions downstairs, and two bedrooms upstairs. It was an older house, but in good shape. There was a parlor (where people could sleep if the space was needed), a dining room, kitchen and pantry.

At first, Por-Por's family, grandparents, and Uncle Frank's family all occupied the Fruitvale house. Por-Por shared a room and bed with her sister Grayce, and sometimes E, as the house was very crowded. One of them would sleep at the top of the bed, one at the bottom and one at the side. Por-Por's parents had an upstairs bedroom and her grandfather (and the uncle's family, before they moved out) was in the basement. Por-Por prided herself on being neat and tidy. As more children were born, Uncle Frank's family moved to their own flat upstairs at the corner of 5th and Oak on the outskirts of Oakland Chinatown.

The Fruitvale house was at the corner of 33rd Ave. and E. 8th, right below the tracks, which were at E. 7th Street. Por-Por says they could walk or take the train to Alameda or the trolley into Chinatown. She remembers Fruitvale as peaceful and quiet. There was only one other Chinese family in Fruitvale, the others being

Germans and other white people. The Chinese, Por-Por says, were a little bit separated from the white people ("not bad, but we didn't mix").

Mary with Allie Wong (son of cousin Anna Bowen Wong), 1919

Auntie E says the neighbors were a mix of white ethnics. She doesn't remember any of them speaking other languages in their homes or speaking English with accents, except for one German family. The neighbors "were as American as we were." She thinks it was by playing with these kids that the Bowen kids started playing baseball and other sports. Apparently Gramps was a big Yankees fan like the grandkids, but James was not a sports fan.

The Hings were the other Chinese family in the neighborhood. They also relocated from San Francisco after the earthquake, but it's not clear which family moved in first. The Hings lived across the street and were a near mirror image of the Bowens. The parents spoke Sam Yup and were about the same age as James and Susie, and the kids also matched. There were seven or eight Hing kids (Lily, Hattie, Willie, Eddie...) and the Bowens more or less paired off with those closest in age. Por-Por was closest to Lily Hing who was about a year older than she.

The Hings' mother and Johnny Won's (Auntie E's future husband) father were brother and sister, and Uncle Johnny, his mom, dad and brother George lived with the Hings.

When Por-Por was eight years old she went to Lincoln School in Oakland Chinatown. She was thus one of the first Chinese to be admitted to public school in Oakland. Lincoln School was in fact

the only Oakland public school Chinese were allowed to attend, and within it classes were almost entirely segregated. The school included kindergarten through 8th grade. Each class, she says, had both "low" and "high" (mid-term and regular year) students, about 30 each per class, or 50-60 total in her classroom, with only one teacher. She remembers the majority of the students were Chinese, there were a good number of whites and maybe a few Mexicans. Por-Por took the train to school each day. She remembers the kids speaking mostly English to each other during recess and lunch times. Lincoln School is still the main school serving Oakland Chinatown, but was entirely reconstructed a few blocks from its original site.

Mary (at left)–holding Dolores, Anna Bowen Wong (middle)–holding child, and Allie Wong (front left), circa 1922

At age 10, with the help of the family doctor (an "American," not Chinese), Por-Por and her siblings entered Dewey School. Dewey was and is located at 3709 East 12th Street, near 38th Avenue, in the Fruitvale district, not far from the BART station. Por-Por remembers Dewey School as structured the same as Lincoln, K-8, and with classes about the same size. Almost all the students were white; the only other Chinese she can remember were her across-the-street neighbors, the Hings and Wons. Por-Por remembers herself as a good speller who liked English. She was the only non-white student in her classes at Dewey.

Por-Por remembers playing a lot of baseball at Dewey School, but she says her mother was very strict with them, wanting them to come home and do their chores rather than stay after school to play. Susie Bowen thought girls should learn to cook and sew and take care of the house, and she started them young. As Por-Por was the

oldest, she was often expected to take charge. Por-Por says her father was kind, never bawled them out, but her mother was sometimes mean, giving them a bad time if they went against her. Por-Por says she never gave any trouble, was willing to learn what her mother wanted, and found her duties came naturally.

When her mother suffered a stroke in 1914, Por-Por dropped out of school to take care of her. After a year, Grayce dropped out to take care of her mother, and Por-Por returned to school. Por-Por thinks she may have been out of school two years taking care of her mom, and Grayce one year, but she did manage to finish the 8th grade. Por-Por remembers that in caring for her mom, they had to bathe her, help her to the toilet, and sit by her bed.

Mary in Vallejo, circa 1940

Por-Por also went to Sunday School at a Presbyterian church in Chinatown for a little while (probably less than one year). The teachers were Chinese, and they did bible study, not English or citizenship studies.

Por-Por was afraid of her grandmother (she says everybody was), so she always behaved. Her grandmother was strict and would scold them, wanting them to be serious, not frivolous, telling Por-Por to be a lady, to be a good girl, not to be sassy, not to talk loudly, not to play, but to do her household duties.

Por-Por or her father would usually do the grocery shopping, taking the train down to the 6th street market in Oakland Chinatown. Because they had no icebox, they shopped every two or three days. There was a small grocery store nearby their house where they could buy bread and milk and so forth, but they preferred to shop in Chinatown. However, she remembers buying fresh-baked bread at a local bakery, six loaves for 25 cents. Because the bread was so cheap, they didn't bother to make their own, though Por-Por says

they had a stove with four burners and room to bake. She says they did simple Chinese stir fry cooking.

Por-Por's mother was from Monterey, but she didn't see her mother's family often. However, Por-Por knew one of her brothers and one of her sisters. The sister, her aunt, had a family in San Francisco Chinatown, with six or eight kids.

Por-Por says she and her brother and sisters were especially close to Uncle Frank and Aunt Mamie's kids until they all married and went their separate ways. Uncle Frank's daughters Anna, Rose, Lillian, Elizabeth and Corinne were about the same age as Dewey, Por-Por, Grayce and Elsye; and his sons Edward, George and Albert were close to Henrye and Florence. Auntie Mamie's daughters Lillian, Alice, Ida, Mable and Dolly nearly matched Elsye, Henrye, Florence and Jennye.

L. to r.: Corrine, Edward, Anna, Allie Wong, Rose, Albert, Elizabeth, George, Henry Wong, date unknown

Por-Por remembers the Hings' father as working at a nearby cannery, where her father also often worked. This cannery was apparently white-owned. Por-Por held her first jobs at this cannery as well—summer jobs during canning season.

One of Por-Por's fondest childhood memories is going to dances. Her Uncle Frank loved to go dancing, and would take his nieces and nephews as well as his own kids. Por-Por loved to dance, as did her cousins, Rose, Liz and Corinne. She and her cousins had no lack of suitors. Boys from as far away as Stockton competed to accompany them. Auntie E remembers Joe Yip of Stockton as particularly interested in Por-Por, but Por-Por is not so sure about this herself.

At first, Por-Por and her uncle and cousins had to go over to San Francisco for these dances. Eventually, the East Bay Chinese started a club that organized its own outings and dances. The vast majority of the members and participants were American-born Chinese, and English was definitely the language of choice. Every month or two, and especially on holidays like New Year's or Thanksgiving, there would be dances at Danish Hall, Ebell Hall or Native Sons of the Golden West Hall. They would often hire six-piece orchestras, usually made up of white musicians, and up to 500 people would attend these affairs. Por-Por's whole group would go out dancing, and then to have something to eat before going home. Sometimes friends of the family who had come from out-of-town would stay overnight. Por-Por remembers Joe Yip, Dr. Chin Low, Dr. Henry Woo, Mack Soo Hoo and many others attending these dances. She says there was "no bad stuff, just good, clean fun." She says she dated, but wasn't serious about anyone before Gong-Gong.

Auntie E remembers that cheek-to-cheek dancing only started to come into vogue when Por-Por was a teenager, but that it had become common by the time she attended these dances.

When Por-Por was 15, she started working at her uncle and fifth aunt's (Anne) sewing factory, where they made jeans and other clothing. It was located at 9th and Franklin in Oakland Chinatown. Por-Por would walk down East 14th Street to work, which took her about an hour.

This uncle, Tong Hong Woo, was from Heungshan, the same district in China that Gong-Gong came from, so that's probably why Gong-Gong was occasionally there. Apparently he took a quick interest in Por-Por, and soon began walking her home, sometimes with 9-year-old Elsye in tow. Auntie E says Gong-Gong would often stop at a bakery to buy custard snails for her to munch on, and thereby keep her out of their conversation. He walked Por-Por home from work almost every day for two years, an hour each way, and sometimes they would walk around Lake Merritt together ("for exercise," Por-Por says).

Mary and Fung Wing, circa late 1940's

Gong-Gong was about 27 and Por-Por 17 when they met. She says they were in different phases of life. She wanted to be fancy free, to have fun, go to shows, to have good times and not to be tied down with marriage and kids. Gong-Gong was serious, focused on succeeding in business, and not interested in dancing or the movies. She says she thought he was a good man, would be able to support a family, and would do well in life.

Toward the end of 1920, Gong-Gong got the opportunity to open up a store of his own in Vallejo. He really put pressure on Por-Por to get married, because he couldn't see her as often, and wanted to start his new life with her from the beginning. Por-Por was reluctant to be tied down so soon, but the distance made her change her mind. She says they "got along well, weren't too choosy, and both liked things simple, plain—no muss, no fuss."

Soon she changed her mind, and the couple decided the easiest course was to elope. They got papers and were married at the courthouse in San Francisco in November of 1920. Por-Por was stripped of her U.S. citizenship for marrying what the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 referred to as an "alien ineligible for U.S. citizenship," and then went on a honeymoon with Gong-Gong in Los Angeles. They told no one—just disappeared until after the honeymoon, when Por-Por called to inform the family that she was now married and living in Vallejo!

The Great Bowens

by Linda (Day), Laraine (Moy) and Bob Wing

Our grandmother, Mary Bowen Wing, is one of five sisters and two brothers. The seven of them are the most interesting, energetic, fun-loving, and family-minded people anyone could ever meet.

Dewey with members of his vaudeville troupe, 1928

Uncle Dewey was in vaudeville. He played the Orpheum circuit with the first, and at the time only, all-Chinese company called "Honorable Wu and his Flora Dora Dancers." Uncle Dewey played the drums and tap danced for the group, consisting of five members. Auntie E once gave Day a photo of Uncle Dewey standing in front of a train, about to go off on one of his vaudeville tours. He's nattily dressed and wearing a big grin. Standing with him are two women, also "dressed to kill." The caption on the back says that one of them is named "Babe." The three of them look ready to conquer the world. Day loves to tap dance, and there are several musicians in the family, including Pudgy, Mitch, Gigi, Joel and Teri. Maybe we inherited our interests from Uncle Dewey?[1]

Uncle Henrye was a baseball fanatic. He and the Bowen cousins and in-laws founded and played on the first East Bay Chinese semi-pro team, the Wa Sung Club. Our dad was their occasional bat boy, especially when the team played in Vallejo, Yountville, or the nearby area. Years later, Uncle Henrye and Uncle Hector took us to the famous 7th game of the World Series in San Francisco and to the first-ever All-Star game played there—two of our greatest child-

hood memories. At Uncle Henrye's memorial service, Auntie Betty's brother Marshall told funny and wonderful stories about Uncle Henrye and the enjoyment he took in baseball. Day is sure Uncle Henrye is in the heavenly baseball hall of fame.

Henrye (r.) and Betty, circa 1944

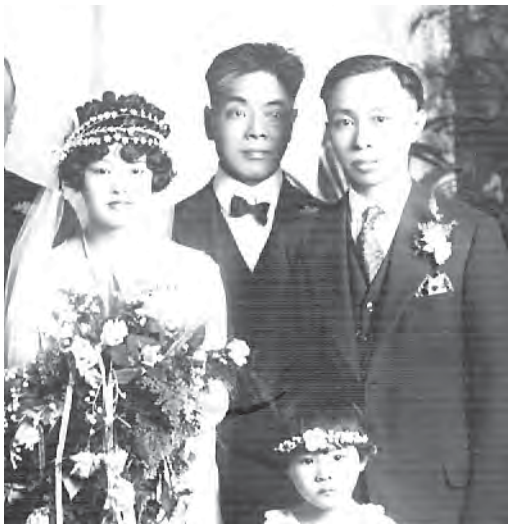
Uncle Henrye, along with Flo and Jennye, was very young when his mother died and spent about seven years with his grandmother and Billy Joe in San Jose. He graduated from Fremont High School in Oakland, and met Elizabeth (Betty) Hoo as a teenager while attending Chinese school in Oakland Chinatown, Auntie Betty's birthplace and home. They married in 1936 at Ebell Hall, the site of many Chinese dances.[2] Uncle Henrye worked for most of his life at the U.S. Post Office as a clerk supervisor and civil service examiner. He was a noted home movie-making buff, in addition to an avid golfer and sports fan. Henrye and Betty were active world travelers and had a wonderful lifelong partnership.

The Bowen sisters have been part of each other's lives forever. Auntie E used to tag along with our grandmother as a "chaperone" on the walks Por took with Gong before they were married. As a teenager, Auntie Jaye lived with Por in Vallejo where she attended high school for one year and worked at the stores. Auntie Flo was married at the Vallejo courthouse, accompanied only by her best friend Hattie Hing and Por-Por. Auntie Flo helped Auntie Betty get her lifelong job at the Maritime Administration. Auntie Grayce's house was the hangout of her sisters and the rest of the extended family during the 1930s

At Grayce's house in Oakland: Top row (l. to r.): Grayce, Flo, Pauline; Second row: Joyce, Mary, E, Janie; Third row: John; Front: Rally, Rhetta, Wendell, circa 1950

and 1940s when everyone, including our Mom and Dad, gathered there for Sunday dinners and holiday festivities. Those gatherings are universally remembered as among the happiest times of the Bowen family. In various combinations, the sisters have regularly gone on vacations together, and still see each other constantly. When the phrase "sisterhood is powerful" became the slogan of the women's movement, we're sure no one had to explain the meaning to Mary, Grayce, Elsye, Flo, Jennye and sister-in-law Betty.

Back (l. to r.): Mary, Grayce, E; Front: Flo, Jaye, 1985



Grayce and Gay at their wedding with James Bowen, 1926

Like her older sister Mary, Auntie Grayce cut short her education after completing Dewey School to care for her mother, and then started work at a young age in the canneries and then as a salesperson. She met Gaylord Wye at the East Bay Chinese dances, and they married in 1926.[3] They had two children, Joyce and Wendel, three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Auntie E was the first Bowen born in Oakland, in 1907. She graduated from Fremont High School in Oakland and married her neighbor John Won in 1929.[4] He held 49er season tickets for years which he sometimes shared with his thrilled grandnephews Bob and Butch. Auntie E worked in accounting most of her life, 13 years at Alameda Naval Air Station and 15 years at Blue Cross. She took

"Going Steady in Fruitvale," E and John, 1927

it upon herself to be the family historian, gathering materials and photographs, doing research work at the County Courthouse, and preparing numerous family trees and vignettes.

Auntie Flo graduated from Roosevelt High School in Oakland, briefly attended Laney College, and married Bing Eng in October of 1933. The two met on a double blind date arranged by cousin Mable Wong (now Mable Lem), who was paired with Bing. However, Mable refused to ride in the rumble seat of the car, so Flo jumped in with Bing and the rest is history.[5] They had two children, Rally and Sharyn, six grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. Auntie Flo has taken loving care of her ailing siblings and in-laws, her strength a comfort to all.

Flo and Bing with granddaughters Rachel and Sara Eng, circa 1990

Auntie Jaye, the youngest child, was only four when her mother died. She lived with Grandma in San Jose from that time until she was 10 or 11, when they returned to the family in the Fruitvale. Auntie graduated from Roosevelt High School in Oakland and attended business school at what is now Merritt College. She met Hector Eng when her brother Henrye brought his teammate home after one of the Wa Sung baseball games, and they married in 1940.[6] They had three children—Cliff, Rodney and Ronald—and three grandchildren.

The great spirit of the Bowen sisters, and of Auntie Betty, we're sure has contributed to their being in terrific physical shape. We always say in our family that our great aunties look and act just as

young as our aunties! (And given the incredible energy of our aunties, that is really saying something.) Our mom has always admired them, saying she hoped she would be just like them when she got older.

L to r.: Grayce, Betty, (Uncle Del in back), Flo, Jaye, Janie, E, our mom Lily, Pauline, 1989

The "greats" have always taken sincere interest in us, their "grands." Whenever we gather for Por-Por's annual birthday dinners, the great aunties inevitably recall some small tidbit in our lives that they remembered us telling them a year ago. Moy and Auntie E developed a kind of special "kindred spirit" relationship because they have the same birthday. Every year up until Auntie E died, they exchanged special birthday cards with each other. Bob has always felt a special connection with the greats, and is proud that Por-Por, her sisters, and Auntie Betty were the very first to visit his daughter, Josina, when she came home from the hospital after birth.

The Bowen sisters are avid sports enthusiasts. Auntie Flo and Auntie Jaye were pioneers of Chinese-American girls softball. Auntie Flo still tells us about her regular tennis games and vacations that include sports. After Kristy Yamaguchi won the gold medal, Por sent Moy an article explaining the different triple jumps in ice skating. This "tradition" of women in sports

The Dragonnettes, City of Berkeley Champs: Flo (second from left standing) and Jaye (second from right kneeling), 1937

The Great Bowens (r. to l.): Mary, Grayce, E, Henrye, Flo, Jaye, 1942

rubbed off, because when Moy was young, she was a "tomboy," preferring to play football, baseball and basketball with the boys out on the street, and pairing up with Dad against Bob and Butch in basketball and table tennis in the back yard. Day was on the fencing team when she was at Stanford. And now the next generation continues on, with Josina playing in softball, soccer and bowling leagues and Teri being on swimming and gymnastics teams.

Our grandmother, great aunties, and great uncles all had and have great hearts and great spirits. They're the "Great Bowens" in every way.

Notes:

[1] Uncle Dewey was a lifelong bachelor, and died at the youthful age of 38 of tuberculosis.

[2] Auntie Betty is the niece of Lena, the wife of Harry Wong, Mary Wong Ching's nephew. Her father died when she was only 11 days old, and she was raised by her paternal uncle and aunt. She graduated from Oakland High School, and worked as a secretary for the Maritime Administration for 30 years.

[3] Uncle Gay was born in San Francisco, but his family moved to the East Bay after the Earthquake. He played on a Chinese baseball team in San Francisco, then managed the Wa Sung team. Uncle Gay worked for the Post Office his entire life, and eventually became the head of the San Francisco Chinatown branch.

[4] Uncle Johnny also came from a "Longtime Californ'" family; his father was born and raised in Monterey. Uncle Johnny was born in San Francisco, but grew up across the street from the Bowens in the Fruitvale. He worked for the Post Office for more than 30 years, rising to the position of Chief Station Examiner in Oakland.

[5] Uncle Bing was born and raised in San Francisco. His parents died when he was only 12 or 13, so he began his work life young. He became a butcher, and eventually owned his own shop for many years aided by Auntie Flo. The couple divorced in 1959, then remarried in 1982.

[6] Uncle Hector was born in San Francisco but was raised in Oakland, where he graduated from Oakland High and then briefly attended U.C. Berkeley. The Engs bought and operated three different grocery stores, the last one in San Jose where they permanently settled. Afterwards, Auntie Jaye worked as a secretary and Uncle Hector in sales.

Baseball Pioneers

Al Bowen, 1932

The Bowen clan and in-laws were at the forefront of the first Chinese-American participation in organized sports. They started and formed the nucleus of the Wa Sung semi-pro baseball team in the 1920s.

Leland Wing, my father, remembers "Henrye and Al Bowen alternated as pitchers and first basemen; George Bowen (son of Frank Bowen) was the third baseman; Uncle Hector was the catcher; Allie Wong, oldest son of 'Auntie' Ann (daughter of Frank Bowen), was in center field; Key Chinn (husband of Margaret, who is Auntie Betty's cousin) was at shortstop; and Uncle Gay was either the coach or manager. I think they were the only Chinese team in the area playing semi-pro." The team toured California cities playing league games. They also played in Oakland's "International League" against black and Mexican teams. Crowds often numbered in the hundreds, and at the end of each game the hat was passed and the proceeds shared.

Al Bowen, the youngest son of Frank Bowen, was the star of the team, and in 1932 became the country's first Chinese professional baseball player. Steve Lavoie of the *Oakland Tribune* reported on Al's professional exploits in January 1993.[1]

"[Like blacks,] Asian Americans were also excluded from organized baseball until two clever owners of old Pacific Coast League teams decided to tap a new market: Asian-American fans of the game.

"As the 1932 season waned, the Depression had seriously diminished crowds at all the Pacific Coast League games. Attendance at Oaks Park [home of the Oakland Oaks minor league team] was dismal . . . . Oaks owner Vic Devincenzi, who would later [unsuccess-

fully] try to sign black players and break that color line, followed [Sacramento Senators owner Lew] Moreing's lead and signed Bowen, a 21-year old favorite of East Bay Chinese-American fans. [Moreing had signed the first Japanese-American professional baseball player, pitcher Kenso Nushida, earlier in 1932.]

L. to r.: Al, Ed and George Bowen, Allie Wong (kneeling), date unknown

"Bowen was well-known in Oakland baseball circles. At Oakland High School, pitching for the Wildcats, Bowen dominated East Bay hitters with a blazing fastball.

"After high school, he pitched for the Wa Sung team, striking out a record 15 batters in a game. . . .In his professional debut, using the name Lee Gum Hong, Bowen frustrated opposing hitters with five innings of one-hit pitching. As luck would have it, bonehead fielding plays by his Oaks teammates led to [his defeat by Nushida and the Senators], 7-5. The game attracted over 3,000 fans to the park—for the first time in months—so a Bowen-Nushida rematch was scheduled for the final game of the season.

"Bowen pitched a seven-inning complete game, allowing only one run. This time, Oaks batters pounded Nushida's offerings and went on to win the game 7-1. Bowen notched his first, and only, professional win. The following season, both pitchers returned to their semi-pro clubs and later to professional jobs outside of baseball."

The Wa Sung, begun as the sponsor of athletic teams, then bloomed into a social service organization serving the Chinese-American community, and continues to this day.

Notes:

[1] Thanks to Steve Laurie for permission to quote his article and for providing the photo of Al Bowen.

PART III
THE WINGS OF VALLEJO

Mary and Fung Wing, 1948

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A Little Family History
(written for my children)

by Dolores Wing Wong

From time to time each of you has expressed some curiosity about your maternal grandparents whom you know as Gong-Gong and Por-Por (her chosen spelling), so let me share the precious little that I know about their lives before I was born.

Gong-Gong, circa late 1940's

Gong-Gong's name was Anglicized as Fung Wing, which happens to be a very true pronunciation of his Chinese name. In China, as you know, one's family name always is given first. The calligraphy for Gong-Gong's family name is two dots and a horse. His given name, Wing, means splendid and grandeur. He also had a middle name, Gum, which means gold, but somehow this was dropped in usage.

Gong-Gong arrived in this country when he was about 16 years old, from the area near Canton in Guangdong Province known as Chungshan or Middle Mountain, famous for being the birthplace of Sun Yat Sen, who founded the Republic of China in 1911 and became its first president. It was never clear to me whether he was brought to this country by a relative or a family friend from the same village. He almost never referred to his early life, but we gathered he had been orphaned at an early age. Because he had to work to survive, he had little formal schooling, but did learn enough to read Chinese newspapers.

Upon arriving in San Francisco, he immediately went to stay at Sun Loy Import Company on Grant Avenue, which was a temporary haven for all the immigrants from his small village. One of the original men from that village had prospered, soon to become the

first Chinese millionaire in this country, so he was able to provide ample employment in his retail stores to his fellow villagers. Unfortunately, his reputation was that he paid low wages and tended to exploit his fellow men, but in later years he became known as a philanthropist.

Gong-Gong was bright and hard-working. He tried to learn English, but whenever he ventured out of Chinatown for classes, there was always the possibility of racial taunts and harassment. He recounted to us stories of being chased off the cable cars and running to avoid being hit. He did learn enough English to be able to read a newspaper, but I cannot remember ever seeing him write anything except his name.

In his mid-twenties his job was to supervise, deliver raw materials, and pick up finished products at various sewing machine factories, also known as garment factories, in Oakland, where he met Por-Por. The only early picture I have ever seen of Gong-Gong shows him nattily dressed with his two best friends, lounging at the park in Lake Merritt on a rare day off. I thought he was by far the most handsome in the picture.

Por-Por's background was very different. She was born in San Francisco Chinatown in 1902, the eldest daughter of James Lee Bowen (1876-1943), also San Francisco-born, and Susie Wong (1878-1918), born in Monterey in the area where the Monterey Aquarium now stands. After the earthquake of 1906, the family, consisting of a paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother, Por-Por's immediate family and her second uncle Frank's family, all moved across the bay to a suburb of Oakland known as Fruitvale. When Uncle Frank's family grew, they moved out into a home of their own, as the Chinese custom is for the eldest son always to live with his parents to support and to care for them.

The family actually acquired the name of Bowen after the move to Fruitvale when the children were ready to enroll in school. A kindly family doctor felt that the grandfather's name of Lee Bo Wen was too foreign-sounding and awkward to pass down in the

family, so great-great-grandfather became Lee Bowen, and his sons James Lee Bowen, Frank Bowen, etc., and Por-Por became Mary Bowen.

Por-Por describes her father as being a loving, sweet, gentle man. Her mother developed a brain tumor, necessitating that Por-Por and her sister Grayce take turns attending school and caring for their invalid mother and younger siblings. As a consequence, Por-Por was only able to complete the 8th grade, following which she was sent to work in her aunt's garment factory.

In spite of the hardships of this family life, Por-Por remembers having good times and fun at dances and at movies in the years before she married. Her uncle Ed loved to dance and would take his nephews and nieces with him, as he had no children of his own. For holidays at Thanksgiving or New Year there would be dances in the Chinese community, where friends would attend from as far away as Stockton. They would attend as a group and have a late midnight supper before going home. Some of the out-of-town friends would even stay overnight at the Fruitvale house.

Por-Por, her sisters and her Bowen girl cousins were considered beauties, and attracted male admirers easily. When Por-Por met Gong-Gong at the garment factory, he was 26 years old to her 16. He was more serious and more ambitious than her other beaus and impressed her with his ideas for the future. He used to walk her home from the factory every day for two years, and sometimes they would walk around Lake Merritt. Often times her younger sister Elsye would tag along, knowing that Gong-Gong would buy her a favorite sweet treat.

In 1920 Gong-Gong had accumulated enough money to start his own business and had found a location in Vallejo, about 40 miles away. Although Por-Por had not planned to marry so soon, Gong-Gong put pressure on her to join him in his new venture and new life, so at the age of 18, she slipped away with him to the City Hall.

Lung Doo

Fung Gum Wing was born in the small village of Ha Hang (now called Ha Juk), Lung Doo subdistrict, within the Pearl River Delta district of Heungshan. Although China is ancient, this coastal district consists largely of reclaimed land and was not settled until the 10th-12th centuries.

Heungshan was the birthplace of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, leader of the revolution against the imperial government and founder of the Chinese republic in 1911. After becoming President of the Provisional Republic, he officially became known as Sun Chung Shan, and in 1925 Heungshan was renamed Chungshan in his honor.

Chungshan sits directly on the coast at the southern part of the Pearl River, 56 miles southwest of Guangzhou, and extends right up to the former Portuguese colony of Macao. See map, p. 10. It is bordered by both Sze Yup and Sam Yup counties, and as many as nine dialects are spoken in the district.

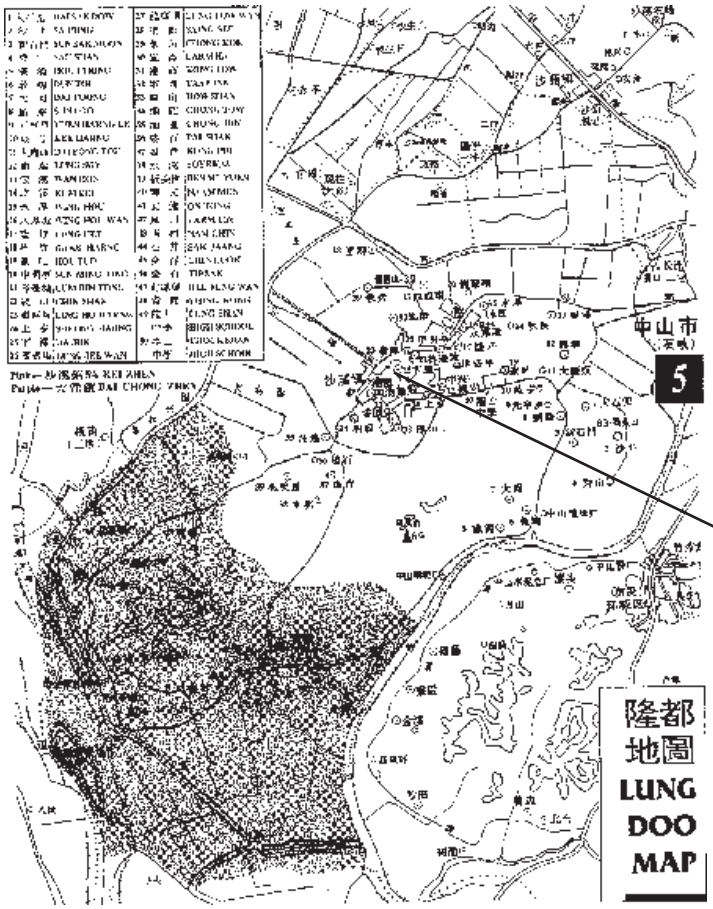
Many emigrants to the United States originate from Chungshan. Today the district includes 650 square miles and has a population of about one million. It is divided into nine "Doo" (subdistricts), contains 363 villages, and is rife with waterways. Lung Doo, Gong-Gong's subdistrict, is located slightly to the northeast side of Chungshan, across a small river from Saakai, the district seat. Today it is divided into the townships of Saakai, Daaichung and Saalong, and parts of Taanbui, Waanglaan and Baanfu townships. It totals about 150 square kilometers in area, and about 100,000 people reside there.

Today Ha Juk is a small village in Saakai township of no more than 200 inhabitants. There are four main surnames in the village, but few Fungs. It is located about seven miles from the city of Saakai and consists of flat, dry territory. One can circle the entire village on foot in about 25 minutes, and the neighboring villages are immediately adjacent to it. Today many of its roads are paved, most houses have limited electricity, but few have indoor plumbing. In the old

days, each village was more or less a feudal domain ruled by a lord and his clan, surrounded by walls to ward off its competitors, but no more.

Fung Wing, circa early 1970's

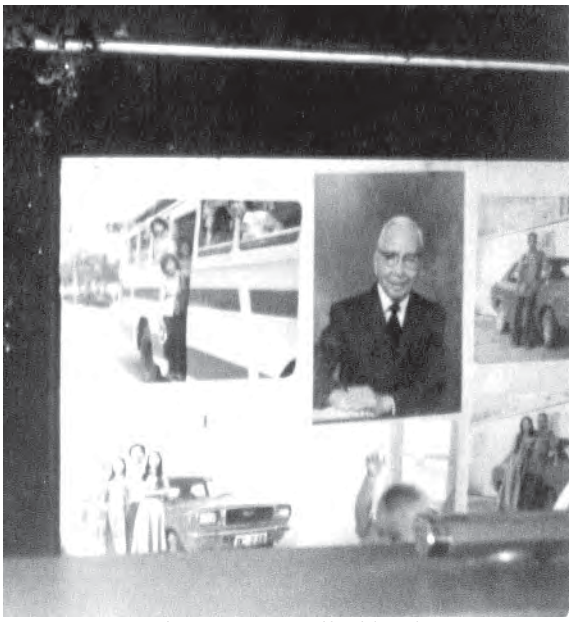
One of the unique features of Lung Doo is that many people migrated there from Fujian, a province just to the north of Guangdong along the coast. In fact, the Lung Doo dialect was originally a local dialect in Fujian called Munnam dialect. This dialect was Gong-Gong's native language. However, inhabitants of the area, including Gong-Gong, are often fluent in Sam Yup, Sze Yup, and other dialects. This unique linguistic ability was a real asset to Gong-Gong in the United States, especially as a businessman.



Ha Juk

Visiting Gong-Gong's House

by Dolores Wing Wong



Picture of Gong on wall of his house in Ha Juk, China, 1986

With the reopening of China to tourists, it had been my goal to see the house where Gong-Gong was born. The opportunity finally came in 1982 (ten years after my daughter Shelley's visit) when Del retired and we were on a tour which enabled us to leave the larger group in Canton for a detour to Chungshan.

We rented a van and driver as three others wanted to make the trip: Helen Low Yee whose father came from a village between Chungshan and Macao, also Sam and Alice Joe, the latter a Lung Doo friend whose village Sun Mun Tong is walking distance from Gong-Gong's village Ha Juk, known as Ha Hang when Gong-Gong was growing up.

I decided not to let anyone in the village know of our arrival, as we didn't want any fanfare. After a day's journey from Canton, we checked into a modern new hotel in Saakai, the district seat, across the river from Lung Doo. We spent the evening after dinner wandering around the streets of Saakai, much larger than we had realized, marvelling at the crowds, the friendliness of the people, the lack of advertising, the cluttered shops, and felt as if we had been transported back in time. It must have looked just this same way when Gong-Gong was a boy, making periodic trips there for rice, oil, soy sauce, and other staples, as well as for clothes, shoes, furniture, and any other necessities.

In the morning after an amazingly good dim sum breakfast costing 60 U.S. cents a person, our driver took us across a short bridge separating Saakai from Lung Doo. In Gong-Gong's day, crossing was by ferry. We went first to the new Lung Doo Guest House Hotel and restaurant where, because Alice had telephoned ahead, her relatives began to appear, one after another, as if they had emerged from the very walls. A table in the dining room originally set for the five overseas Chinese and driver quickly expanded to 14. Much excitement and hubbub was generated as introductions were made and lines of relationship between Alice and her newfound relatives were established.

Ha Juk, China, circa 1986

During a lull in the conversation, I flashed a picture given me by Shelley taken of Gong-Gong's first cousin and only living relative at the time of her visit. He had been born after Gong-Gong came to the U.S. and was in his late 60s when Shelley met him but, unfortunately for me, had passed away before I came. Immediately there was a flash of recognition and some of Alice's relatives offered to let his family know of our visit. Before we knew it, the widow of the first cousin and her youngest son, about 30ish, arrived together on one bicycle. They remembered Shelley's visit, were astonished I could speak Chinese, were too excited and polite to join us for lunch as we were almost through eating, and happily led the way to their home.

The widow was thrilled to ride in the van with us, but when we reached her lane, it was too narrow for the vehicle, so we walked the short distance to her house where her son on bicycle had preceded us and was waiting with his two younger sisters, early 20ish.

The house was next door to one owned by the Yee Jun family of Suisun. Next to that was a two storied much more elaborate structure owned by a Siu family (descendants Dr. Tim Siu and Dr. George Sheu live in Los Angeles). Gong-Gong's house was not only very old, but very small and very dark. I don't believe there was electricity, running water or indoor plumbing. We sat in the dark, all purpose living room conversing, trying to cram in information since Gong-Gong's departure 75 years ago and trying to get acquainted with the present family. The widow, I discovered, was about my age, but a hard life made her appear much older. She had reared seven children. An older daughter was married and living in a village nearby. Other older children had moved to Hong Kong. The son remaining was alert and enterprising. He often roasted chickens and pigs in the yard to sell.

I explained the purpose of my visit. During Gong-Gong's lifetime, he had sent money when requested for repainting, repairing or maintaining the house. Now that he was gone, it was upsetting to Por-Por to receive their letters in Chinese, which she could not read, asking for financial help. Moreover, she was on a limited income. All of Gong-Gong's family had responsibilities for their own families. It was therefore our wish that they accept the house as our gift to do with whatever they wanted. I was unprepared for the delight that this offer brought forth.

The son happily ran to another room, returning with legal papers which he said needed to be notarized and signed by me and my brother Bud (as Gong-Gong's only son, he was considered the actual owner) to deed over the property.

The visit was altogether too short. We took a number of pictures. We left gifts of hose and lipstick and a huge plastic bag of clothes, shoes, and sheets, all donated by other members of our tour, as Canton was the last stop in China and everyone had luggage to discard. The widow and I agreed we would probably not see each other again in this lifetime. They all thanked us profusely as they accompanied us back to the hotel to meet Alice and the others.

Marshall Wong with Gong's relatives in Ha Juk, China, circa 1986

On our return to the U.S., we did follow through in sending necessary documents to turn over the house, and in return received letters of thanks, letters expressing pleasure that we had visited, and, after awhile, letters asking us to find husbands for the two unmarried sisters.

What's in a Name (5)?

Gong-Gong's name was Fung Gum Wing. Like most Chinese surnames, Fung is a place name. According to "The Origins of Chinese Names," by Yip-wang Law, Fung was a township in the ancient (pre-unified China, before 220 B.C.) feudal state of Zheng. Gum means gold, and Wing means splendid or grand. Gong-Gong never adopted an American name.

Por-Por gave the kids their American names. She named all but her son after popular movies or movie stars of the day. Dolores was named after Dolores Costello; Pauline after the film "Perils of Pauline"; Leland after Leland Stanford, the famous railroad magnate who founded Stanford University; Janie after Jeanette MacDonald; and Loretta after Loretta Young. None of the children have middle names. Although Gong-Gong's family name was Fung, they all ended up with the Chinese-American family name Wing. In fact, Wing is a male given name, a Chinese equivalent to Robert or John, not a family name. But since Chinese say their family names first and given names last, many had their given names inverted to family names, and vice versa in the U.S.

Here are their Chinese-American names, nicknames, and Chinese names with translation.

Dolores (Do)—Fung Mo Jing (aspiring to virtue)
Pauline—Fung Boa Lin (precious lotus)
Leland (Bud)—Fung Wei Mun (wisdom of the people)
Janette (Janie)—Fung Git Jong (immaculate appearance)
Loretta (Rhetta)—Fung Mew Lon (wonderful orchid)

The children's Chinese names do not follow the traditional structure of Chinese names, as they are scholar names, not birth names. All but Auntie Do were named by I.C. Woo, their Chinese teacher. Auntie Do was named by Thomas Lowe, who worked for Gong-Gong and Por-Por, and who self-proclaimed himself to be her godfather. For a number of years, she called him, at his request, "Kai Yeh," but Gong-Gong disapproved and ultimately made her stop.

The Family Business
(written for my children)

by Leland Wing

Grand opening of Bargain Corner: L. to r.: Janie, Rhetta, Leland (Bud), 1937

I can't remember when Por did not work at the store. When I was small, she worked at the Vallejo Dollar store during the day and the Men's Shop at night. Taking care of the house and cooking dinner was just an additional duty. During the booming pre-war days, she would open the Bargain Corner about 8 a.m., Gong would come in about noon; then Por would leave about 3 or 4 to go grocery shopping, cook dinner, then back to the store to relieve Gong while he went home to eat. Por would stay until midnight and Gong would stay until 2 a.m. when the liquor store had to close. The store opened 365 days a year.

To my knowledge, my mother never had a regular day off in her life. I remember how the family would gripe about going into Vallejo for Thanksgiving and Christmas, only to have Por and Gong rotating shifts to keep the store open even during meal time. It wasn't until many years later that they finally agreed to close the store on Christmas so that both could sit down and eat with the whole family.

Nor was business all that smooth—their first store failed. According to Por:

> "Our first store was opened by Gong-Gong just before we were married. It was called the Bargain Store and was located at 310 Georgia Street in Vallejo. It was open for two years. It was closed down due to a bad business deal. What

happened was that Gong-Gong bought some goods from another person who had never paid for them himself. Finally the original wholesaler went after the middleman for payment, and ended up tracking down all the people this guy had sold the goods to, including Gong-Gong. Our goods were confiscated and the store was closed. The guy who Gong-Gong bought the goods from skipped the country, never to be seen again."

They went to live at 164-8th Street in Oakland for two years, where Pauline and I were born. Gong and Por didn't work, but were waiting for the proceeding in Vallejo to be completed.

Por remembers that:

"Gong-Gong raised money for a new store by asking friends to put in money and buy shares in the business. At the peak of business, there were three stores, plus the Lucky Spot gambling house: two little ones in the 200 block of Georgia Street (one on the corner and one half-way up the block), and a big one up the next block. The big store was called the 'Vallejo Dollar Store.' The little one was the 'Men's Shop,' a little hole-in-the-wall men's clothing business next to a sporting goods store. In both those cases, we bought the business, not the building, but with the 'Bargain Corner' we bought the building too. I noticed the ad in the paper that it was up for sale, and told Gong-Gong because I thought that was a better location, being on the corner. A Jewish man ran the store and the owner wanted to sell, so we bought the building. When we cut back and sold off the businesses, the 'Men's Shop' was the first to go (it wasn't doing much) and then the Vallejo Dollar Store, but we kept the Bargain Corner."

Georgia Street was Vallejo's main street and "downtown" was only about four blocks long. The 300 and 400 blocks constituted the legitimate business district, and the 100 block was filled with bars, whorehouses and gambling joints, including our Lucky Spot.

The 200 block was sort of a half-and-half zone: the upper half of the block had a bank, a hotel (which also housed the local bowling alley—no minors allowed in those days), the town sporting goods store, and a few other legitimate businesses like a tailor shop, drug store, etc.

The "Vallejo Dollar Store" was at 340 Georgia, in the "uptown" part of the main drag, across the street from our arch rival "National Dollar Store," owned by Joe Shoong. Our store was a carbon copy of their successful chain, complete with a bright red sign across the top of the entire storefront. I was never allowed to work in that store, but Pauline was—I remember the women had to wear green smocks.

The Bargain Corner catered to Mare Island Navy Shipyard laborers and sailors. There was a "Navy Tailors" next door, and when it failed, we cut a door through the wall and ran it in conjunction with the store. It had a steam press and a sewing machine—it was there that Por sewed insignias and made alterations to uniforms.

We carried all varieties of work clothes, including special overalls, coveralls, rain gear, gloves, and shoes for different skills like welders, shipfitters, etc. For the sailors, we carried not only dungarees and work shirts, but later on, dress uniforms, which we altered to fit. Did you know that bell bottom trousers were not regulation—so that the sailors would bring us their uniforms to be belled?

We also carried sport shirts and slacks for the sailors to wear off duty. I remember basic dungarees selling for 59 cents, but Levis cost about 3 dollars. Underwear was 25 cents per shirt or shorts. This was when brand name cigarettes were two packs for a quarter—10 cents for off brands like Wings. You could buy a pint of rot gut bourbon for 39 cents.

These multiple stores carried pretty much the same inventory, which led to one of "life's most embarrassing moments," in that I and Mr. Lowe had to move stock among the three stores, using a bright red kids' Piggly Wiggly wagon. Can you imagine load-

ing it up with boxes and pulling it for two blocks through the main street in town?

Because the Bargain Corner (which was its real name—I think Rhetta added the "Busy" as sort of a joke) was right in the middle of the bar district at 201 Georgia, we were serenaded every weekend night by the Salvation Army. They would play their hymns, then one of them would step forward and confess his/her sins and tell how he/she was saved. For most of my high school years, one of my best friend's father was the head of the Salvation Army, so my friend had to play his accordion in front of our store every weekend. He never had to confess, but his sister used to screech out her repentance.

Because of our clientele, we had our usual number of drunks. On one occasion, I remember a sailor chasing a bar girl all around the store. He got mad because he bought her a pair of hose and she wouldn't let him put them on her. The Shore Patrol always had a number of teams patrolling the area, so there weren't many serious incidents of violence. The Y was just around the corner and up the block from the store, and I remember a whorehouse right next to the Y. As the sailors went to and from the Y, the whores would tap on the windows, inviting them in. In the Y locker room, the Navy set up a "pro" station, where the sailors could doctor themselves up with ointment to hopefully prevent VD. The Navy was tolerant, but when the war started, the Army moved in and pinned "off limits" signs on the whorehouses and many of the bars.

I remember the pay for laborers at Mare Island jumping from 50 cents per hour to the tremendous sum of $5/day during the pre-war build up. That resulted in thousands of "Okies" migrating to California to work at war-related plants. We had shipyard workers who actually cashed their checks at the store by marking an "X" on their checks (since they couldn't write their names). We were protected because the checks had their badge numbers on them, and we had them show their badges when cashing checks. We didn't charge for cashing checks but required a dollar minimum purchase and consequently the store did a land office business cashing those

Mary and Fung Wing, 1954

checks—we actually had to lock the front doors to keep people out.

In those days it was the custom, at least for Chinese businesses, to house and feed their employees, so every night Mr. Lowe and whoever else worked at the store (never more than two or three men) would eat dinner with us. Por would cook dinner, then go down to the store to relieve Gong while he came home for dinner. I think we rented a house across the street where the men slept. Later, one of them married a local girl and lived there with his family of two girls. I think Mr. Lowe left us before the war boom and after the war we never again had any permanent male Chinese help.

The Dollar store was sold to the Oakland Toggery people and the Men's Shop closed a few years after the Bargain Corner opened, as it wasn't doing much business.

When I worked at the Bargain Corner in the early '50s, business was not great, but it was OK. Since Por and Gong had done nothing but run the store for their entire lifetime, I assume they kept it just for something to do. The reason the Bargain Corner was finally closed was that the Vallejo waterfront was redeveloped, and all the property owners were forced to sell their property to the city—not because of declining business. The city bought both the store and our two houses—26 blocks in all. Large banks or savings and loan associations replaced our old businesses. Luckily Por and Gong were ready to retire anyway, and took the opportunity to move to San Francisco Chinatown.

Lucky Spot

by Leland Wing

During the pre-World War II days, Vallejo had one of the infamous "sin cities" of the U.S. These "cities" were districts usually adjacent to major permanent military bases, such as Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and Galveston, Texas. In Vallejo's case, the base was Mare Island Naval Shipyard, just across the water from downtown. Vallejo's district was unique, however, in that in addition to the bars and whorehouses which were frequented by the servicemen, there were gambling joints.

The entire block-and-a-half of "lower" Georgia Street (the town's main street) was dotted with gambling joints when the political climate permitted. I seem to recall as many as 4-5 gambling joints operating at various times, but not continuously. They were typically small, "storefront" operations. I seem to recall at least one gambling joint being run for a while by Filipinos, but most were operated by Chinese. I vaguely remember aborted attempts by whites to operate from time to time. To my knowledge, the blacks didn't have organized gambling, but probably shot craps at places like Bud Green's night club/whorehouse, which was next door to our house.

Our gambling parlor was called the Lucky Spot. It was located on the 100 block of Georgia Street, half a block down from the Bargain Corner on the same side of the street. This block, called the Bar District, started on the waterfront where ferries took sailors and workers to Mare Island and was dominated by bars, whorehouses and gambling joints. The storefront actually sold cigarettes, wine and beer. I especially remember selling wine right out of keg into people's own cups, but the real business was gambling in the back room.

I estimate the customers were about half-white, half-Asian, with a smattering of blacks. Most of the Asians were Filipino single

men and almost all the gamblers were in the armed service or worked at the shipyard. I don't remember when it started, but it was always there in my memory.

I remember working for a short time in the "storefront" pushing the buzzer to allow the gambling patrons to enter the backroom gambling casino. I must have been 11 or 12. After a short time, the cops came by and suggested it was inappropriate for a little kid to be manning the door to a gambling joint.

Chinese lottery ticket

Although the gambling joints had "21" tables and other games like "Chuck-a-luck," the most popular game was Chinese lottery, which was essentially the same game as the Keno played in today's casinos. The main differences were that Chinese characters were used in place of numbers on the ping pong balls, and the mixing and selection of the balls was done manually.

Chinese lottery has been around for centuries, and much has been written about it, including the story that carrier pigeons were used to spread the word about what the winning characters were. The game has remained essentially the same. It begins with the customer marking a ticket which has a choice of 80 characters or numbers (1 through 80), lined up in eight rows of 10 characters/numbers per row. I believe the Chinese characters used are supposed to be a classic poem or story. You can mark any number of characters/numbers from 1 through 20, and in those days you could bet as little as 10 cents per ticket. Most habitual lottery players have either a favorite "pattern" or set of characters/numbers that they repeatedly play.

There are also variations, where you can use the same numbers to play multiple tickets in the same game—these are called "way" tickets. At most modern casinos, the tickets are marked electronically, but in the old Chinese lotteries it was done manually with brush pens. Periodically the 80 ping pong balls on which characters/numbers are marked were mixed by rotating the spherical cage in which they are housed. Then 20 of them were selected. Depending upon how many numbers you marked, how many of them were among the 20 selected and the dollar amount of your wager, you could win varying amounts up to very large sums. I think that was the allure of the game for the small bettor—the opportunity to win big without wagering much. The more numbers you mark, the higher the potential payoff.

I remember one time a customer winning a sizable lottery ticket and buying Pauline a red hat—she apparently had given him good luck?

The gambling joint was sort of on-again, off-again, based on the will of local political officials. We made regular payoffs to them, through the Tong (which probably took a cut).[1] I remember at Christmas time each year, every cop in town would stop by the store and Gong would take them into the back room and give them liquor and cigarettes. The local DA was more discreet—he didn't come by, but I remember delivering a package to his house at Christmas time.

When the war started, the Army posted most of lower Georgia St. as "off limits" to their personnel. Although the Navy tolerated bar businesses for decades, that was the beginning of the end for Vallejo's "sin city."

Note:

[1] The tongs were main organizers of the Chinese gambling houses and other illicit businesses in the Chinese-American community. The early Chinese were allowed no access to the mainstream labor market, business licenses, politics, public safety or justice systems. The tongs (and family associations) took over these functions, often exacting a price for this "service." Among other things, they pooled money, designated who could start businesses, "protected" those businesses, and organized gambling houses associated with them.

Notes on Vallejo

by Leland Wing

Leland (Bud), circa 1927

We all grew up in the 207 Capitol house, which we rented. It wasn't until after World War II that Por and Gong bought 207 and 209, the house next door. At that time 209 was renovated and then used as their residence. 207 stood vacant for years—I don't recall it ever being used again.

There was a whorehouse next door to 207, on the corner. At times the ground floor was used as a nightclub—at least there was loud music and dancing there. The place was run by a friendly black man named Bud Green and his mulatto wife, who looked like a dried up old witch with powder all over her painted face.

Our backyard was fenced in, as was our next door neighbors'. To get to the alley, we had to walk two doors up the street, down Harvey Tom's long driveway, past the beehives his father kept, past the chicken and pigeon coops he kept, past a small shack where a Filipino man lived, and finally past the garages to a gate to the alley. We used to take this way to walk to the store.

I remember a Chinese laundry in the alley and I think the Tong had a clubhouse next to the laundry. At the end of the block was one of my favorite places—the kitchen to an Italian residence hotel called the Astor House. Almost every Sunday for lunch, we would buy spaghetti and ravioli directly from the kitchen—25 cents a quart for spaghetti and 35 cents a pint for ravioli. The chef had these huge pots of boiling water, and he would scoop up a handful

of homemade spaghetti and ravioli and put them in a strainer and lower them into the pot of boiling water. He had large pots of sauce simmering on the stove and would grate cheese from large chunks.

That was the closest thing we ever got to restaurant food, except for the rare occasions when Por had to go out of town for an illness, death in family, etc. Then we got to go to a Chinese restaurant for a 35 cent, 5 course meal, including delicious custard pie for dessert. Other prices that I remember from those days: 25 cents for a haircut, unless you went to a union barber where it was 35 cents. Ten cents for kids at the movies—we used to attend Saturday matinees and see the cowboy and Tarzan serials that ran like mini-series, continued every week.

Bud (middle); Do (to his right rear); Pauline (to his left rear) with Yun children, 1930

The lower half of our block was inhabited mostly by Filipinos. Harvey Tom's family lived two doors away, and later Poy Yin's family (wife and two girls) lived across the street. In the upper half of the block were several boarding houses, a very small grocery store on the corner, and across the street from the grocer was a large house belonging to the fire chief, or some high city official. The 300 block of Capitol Street was the beginning of the lower middle class white neighborhood. I remember one of our junior high school teachers living there. The 100 block of Capitol ended in a barren field, which was later used as a city playground—it was bordered by the waterfront.

Except for the black church kiddie corner from our house, the 100 block was nothing but boarded up shacks where some blacks lived on and off—no families that I know of. Blacks also lived around the corner and across the street from the house, in slightly better shantytown places that I believe were mostly rentals for itinerants.

The only Japanese family in town lived about two blocks from us—one of the older sons was Charlie Kikuchi. Charlie Kikuchi was a college graduate and wrote a book that traced the decline of the role of the Japanese fathers in the families, due to the stripping away of their authority at the WWII Japanese relocation/internment camps.

We had an "icebox" at the Vallejo house until about 1940. The iceman would make a regular route in the neighborhood (like the milkman) to deliver ice. He would chop off a chunk the size you wanted (25 pound minimum?) and carry it with his tongs and put it into the top compartment of the icebox. Food was stored in the lower compartment. In our 207 Capitol house, we had a pantry adjacent to the kitchen—it was a small room with no windows, but it had screened vents for the air to circulate. Food that needed to be kept cool but did not require ice was stored there. We didn't get an electric refrigerator until very late. We never had a washing machine and to this day you can find a scrub board in Por's bathroom.

L. to r.: Janie, Do, Pauline, Bud, 1933

There was a relatively large Chinese population in Vallejo and surprisingly, I think the majority were families. Most of the kids in these families were quite a bit older than I was—quite a few were closer to Por's age—so I really didn't know them too well. On our block was the Tom family, where the Chinese school was located. Harvey, the youngest of four kids, lives in the Bay Area and attends some of our family gatherings (funerals, etc.). I think he's around 80. He and Ed Fung, who ran the Vallejo Dollar store after we sold it, are about the only people from Vallejo that I know Por has kept up a friendship with.

The Choy family ran the National Dollar Store. Among the

Chinese in Vallejo, their five kids probably matched us closest in age, but since the stores were bitter rivals, we never associated with them. After we sold the Dollar store, it was run by a Fung family, who had only one son—he is now the optometrist to whom Por goes.

One of the workers at the store/gambling joint, Poy Yin, married a local woman and lived across the street—they had two girls. Around the corner was the Gee family, who also had Louie cousins living with them—together there were about seven kids. Down the street from the Gees was a family whose two sons ran a gas station. On lower Georgia, there was the family that ran the Kin Fong restaurant—I don't remember how many kids because they were mostly younger, but one of their girls married a Gee son. Across the street from the Lucky Spot gambling joint was a small grocery store run by the Fong family (at least seven kids, the youngest was Do's age) and a relative who also had a son. They ran a gambling joint there off and on too.

Bud, circa 1935

This Fong family is rather famous in California Chinese history, in that one of the older daughters was the first public nurse or something and another the first public school teacher? One of the sons was also briefly in the movies—a Charlie Chan son-type.

Next to the grocery store was a Chinese laundry, run by a Yow family with two kids, one a boy a few years older than me. I used to marvel at his proficiency with the old fashioned irons that they used at the laundry. The irons were not electric, but heated over a fire. You had to use pot holders to hold them. The trick was to heat them to the desired temperature. You tested for this by passing your fingers over the ironing plate. Two irons were used—one was heating while the other was in use.

At the other end of Georgia Street, the Hall family ran a

restaurant—it was a funny setup. The father and three older kids ran the restaurant, but the mother and two younger kids lived in Berkeley. The Tom family, with two boys about my age, moved to Vallejo from Benicia—the boy my age was killed in the war and the other worked at the Bargain Corner for several years before moving to Alaska. There was a Wong family with two kids almost Por's age, and various assorted single men in town. Over the years, several Chinese herbalists and their families came to town, but none of them lasted more than a few years.

This relatively large Chinese community rarely had get-togethers—the exception was the jocks, who had a softball and tennis team. I remember when I was very young some high level official from China came to town. All the Chinese in town gathered for one of those panoramic photographs—where you could pose on one end of the group and after the camera began panning, you could run to the other end so that you appeared twice in the picture—a favorite mischievous prank.

Bud and his mom in Oakland, 1991

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PART IV
REMINISCENCES OF THE FOURTH GENERATION

Family of Mary and Fung Wing, 1942
L. to r.: Pauline, Leland, Loretta, Fung Wing, Mary, Janette, Dolores

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Memories of Growing Up in Vallejo

by Dolores Wing Wong

Dolores, 1938

I was born in 1921, first child to Mary Bowen and Fung Wing, then 19 and 29 years old. Because of his disappointment that I was not a boy, Gong-Gong never came to the hospital. Instead, his younger unmarried brother whom we called "Jook Jook" in the Lung Doo dialect, would visit daily.

Growing up in Vallejo was dreary, especially during the depression years. Vallejo was a one industry town depending upon Mare Island Naval Shipyard for its survival. There were no recreational outlets and no arts programs, so my one outlet was the public library where I spent all my spare time. I also was a dedicated Sunday school student, later a teacher when I was of high school age, at the First Presbyterian Church. I wanted to join the church when I was 12 years old but did not for lack of parental approval. Gong-Gong used to tease me on Sundays, asking, "Did you see Jesus today?"

Gong-Gong and Por-Por were completely absorbed in their dry goods store and in making money to support not only their growing family of five children but Gong-Gong also sent money to China to help relatives, arranged passage and expenses for relatives like "Jook Jook" and "Lock Kee" (another relative of Gong-Gong), established "Jook Jook" in the restaurant business, and loaned money to others from his same ancestral village, most of which was never repaid.

Both Gong-Gong and Por-Por were hardworking, driven people whose lives completely revolved around their store, so that in all the years I was growing up, they worked 365 days a year without taking time off for any Sundays, holidays, or any fun. During the war years, the store prospered and in later years they even took a trip to Europe and one to Hong Kong, but this all happened after I left home.

Until I left home, Gong-Gong was the strong patriarch whom we feared for his bad temper and criticisms. He had a reputation for being stingy and was referred to as "Jew Ghost Wing" by the other Chinese in town. We grew up under the rule that "children are to be seen but not heard." It was expected that we do well in school and if we didn't bring home all A's, he expressed strong disapproval.

Gong-Gong was also strict in matters regarding cosmetics and boys. When I reached high school age, I had to apply lipstick a block away from home which I would carefully remove after school. I never did find a way to sneak wearing nail polish, so to this day I don't. I had never participated in any social or extracurricular activities but when I was ready to graduate from high school, I really wanted to attend my senior prom. Two girlfriends from San Francisco, Nora and Anita Lee, who came often to Vallejo to visit the Gee family around the corner, arranged for a blind date from San Francisco. Because I came home after Gong-Gong was in bed, Por-Por participated in the cover up by unbolting the front door lock so I could get in.

We all had responsibilities from an early age as Por-Por not only put in at least eight hours at the store but did all the marketing and cooking. My responsibilities were to help with the younger children (Auntie Rhett was 11 years younger, so I used to develop strong arm muscles rolling her baby buggy back and forth to get her to sleep), to make school lunches for everybody, to wash the rice and vegetables before meals, to do dishes afterwards. By the time I was in high school I did all the family housework and laundry (fortunately sheets and towels were sent out because we had no washing

machine but I remember with dread having to scrub mucous-filled handkerchiefs on a ribbed washboard for everyone after runny noses and bad colds in the days before kleenex). I used to spend four to five hours ironing every Sunday, hating the starched white middy blouses which were part of our junior high school uniform, but fortunately I was entertained by my girl friend Alice Kikuchi who would park at our house all day talking to me.

We never had birthday parties. Treats would include an occasional Saturday matinee for 10 cents. We received two new dresses a year, at Easter and Christmas. Our clothes and shoes were often ordered out of the Sears or Montgomery Ward catalogs.

Dolores and Pauline, 1937 or 1938

Our family life can only be described as unhappy and boring. I felt sorry for Por-Por who seemed to be trapped in her marriage with seemingly no love and no enjoyment, only work, work, work. Gong-Gong's one interest seemed to be to make money and by the time his business prospered and he could relax a little, I was grown and gone.

School was my biggest source of satisfaction. I was an apt pupil and skipped three grades. At 9th grade graduation I was embarrassed, yet proud, when the Superintendent of Schools (Elmer L. Cave) announced from the stage that at age 13, I was the youngest graduate he had ever had. In high school I wanted to enroll in the college prep curriculum, but Por-Por felt college would be a waste of time and money, that I probably would marry anyway. In order to satisfy her feeling that being a secretary was the best practical goal, I completed two years of shorthand and typing on top of the college prep courses. After I started college, I even spent one summer studying bookkeeping in order to keep my options open.

By December 1937 I had completed high school graduation requirements, but not wanting to enter U.C. Berkeley as a midtermer, I took a job working for the Superintendent of Schools (Cave again) at what I thought was the princely wage of 50 cents an hour.

One great influence in my life was our Chinese school teacher I.C. Woo, whom I used to resent because he made me work so hard, but looking back he really stretched my potentials and his assumption that I would go to college no doubt had some influence on Gong-Gong. I.C. Woo molded my first political identifications, as he hated the political corruption of the Chinese Chiang Kai Shek government and the Kuomintang, and was sympathetic to the Chinese communists, then known as "agrarian reformers." He bought the first recording of "Chee Lai," the 19th route military marching song which became the Communist rallying music, which he made us memorize. To this day I can not only still sing this in Mandarin, but translate it into English as well.

Although I was just a high school student I.C. Woo and Ed Fung (good family friend who later organized the first Chinese Community Club of Vallejo) pushed me into the position of "English secretary" for an organization to raise and send money for war-torn China. My main duty was to maintain a correspondence in English with Madame Chiang Kai Shek, as I.C. Woo insisted that money raised be remitted directly to her for use with her orphans.

After assuming this post, I was next pushed after I was in college into representing the Chinese community as a member on the newly formed Mayor's Committee for Racial Equality, which came into being to meet the problems that Vallejo was facing in a new wartime economy. Mare Island Navy Yard was suddenly deluged with federal contracts for shipbuilding and repair, necessitating a huge increase in the labor force and the recruitment of workers from Oklahoma and the deep south. The population zoomed from a sleepy 10,000 to 200,000, creating problems in housing, education, recreation, and race relations.

By 1943, when I had not only graduated from Berkeley but completed a year of graduate work in the School of Social Work, Vallejo was crying for social workers. Because I felt familiar with the resources

and conditions there, I accepted a job with the USO-Travelers Aid Service where I remained until 1945, when my supervisor greatly encouraged me to complete my M.S.S. at her alma mater, Smith. When I took the train to Northhampton in May 1945, I did not realize I was saying a final goodby to 207 Capitol Street as during my absence Gong-Gong and Por-Por were to buy the mirror house at 209, renovate it and move in, forever abandoning my childhood home with its less-than-happy memories.

Dolores and Bud, 1944

Although I had less than a happy childhood, nonetheless, I am indebted to Gong-Gong and Por-Por for some strong personality traits they cultivated in me and for helpful lifelong habits learned at their knees. This additional information may help my own children better to understand patterns in my life which they consider eccentric and/or overblown.

Herewith I acknowledge important legacies inherited from Gong-Gong and Por-Por:

First and foremost, thrift and frugality. As the oldest child, I grew up during the most difficult of Gong's struggling years to build up a business, and during the worst of the depression years. We learned never to be extravagant nor wasteful. We were the original recyclers and saved paper bags, rubber bands, paper clips, pins, cotton rice sacks, even aluminum foil salvaged from discarded cigarette wrappers. We saved newspapers for wrapping garbage, and used the want ads and comic sections to reline our kitchen and dining room shelves. Por-Por watched the stores carefully for sales and, if there was a limit of one item per customer for toilet paper, for instance, we were all sent to stand in line. This may help my children to accept my preoccupation to this day with coupons.

The second most important lesson from Gong and Por was punc-

tuality. When they said, "Be at the store to help at 4:00 p.m." (when the potential customers would stream by on their way home from their working day at the shipyard), they did not mean 4:01. In later years when they would set family dinners for 5:30 p.m. (their favorite time because the restaurants would not be busy and we would receive better attention from the chef), any one arriving one minute later would be greeted with baleful looks.

Gong, Por and Dolores, 1971

Other lessons as we were growing up included neatness and organization (Gong and Por were constantly arranging the stock at the store in orderly fashion, refolding the clothing with military precision); patience (we had customers who could deliberate 20 minutes or more before deciding between narrow or wide stripes on underwear); industry and hard work (for which Gong and Por were the ultimate examples); courtesy and respect for elders (not only to them as parents but to the other employees whom we were required to greet each time we met by calling out in a clear voice "sin saang" which is equivalent to "hello sir").

Still other lessons taught us were humbleness and modesty (Gong could not tolerate anybody who bragged and could never ever bring himself to praise his own children for any accomplishments); obedience (Gong did not allow any back talk from either his wife or employees, not to mention his children who were at the bottom of the pecking order).

Finally I personally learned that patience, persistence and compromise can definitely lead to delayed gratification. My desire to attend college in spite of maternal disapproval, fueled by my willingness to add to my schedule the business and clerical courses she only considered useful ultimately enabled me to enroll at U.C. Berkeley, a decision which opened up all kinds of new and happy horizons for me.

Reminiscences

by Pauline Wing Lou

Pauline, circa early 1940's

I recall as a child growing up in Vallejo:

going to the Fruitvale house and marvelling at cousin Ruthie[1] with all her fine toys

being forced by Uncle Dewey to eat soft boiled eggs with runny gooey yolks and hating eggs for years to come

Tai-Gong with his cane, tap tapping his way to the dark bedroom in the back where Tai-Po lay in bed

reading under the covers by using a flashlight for light

being asked what I wanted to eat for my first meal after recovering from chicken pox and requesting bread and butter

being able to choose what shoes I wanted from the Montgomery Ward catalog and always choosing black patent T straps

the old icebox in the back enclosed porch where laundry was hung on lines during the rainy season

going to the bakery every morning as it was my job to get a loaf of Lily bread; then coming home to a locked front door which I was supposed to have left unlocked as I went out but which I never remembered to do

delivering "bribe gifts" at Xmas to city officials to avoid raids on Lucky Spot, where gambling took place in the back

what a treat it was to have home baked biscuits which mother baked for afterschool snacks

doing the dishes with Do and reviewing the day's events thusly

going to a nearby Italian restaurant for our favorite ravioli and spaghetti

milk was delivered; and laundry too

Saturdays which were spent ironing the mountain of laundry

that was clean but not pressed

walking pass the crowd of leering Filipinos on my way from home to work

ignoring the drunk in the alley who showed off his pitiful penis

feeding the chickens next door with our leftover rice

going out to Oakland with Jaye on the Greyhound bus and being met by Hector who escorted us on foot all the way to Flo's

staying with Grayce in the summer or E or Flo and having a strawberry waffle at the dime store as a special 10 cent treat

listening to the Green Hornet on the radio

answering a late night knock at the door and, as instructed by mother, telling the caller who "wanted a girl" to "go next door"

going by ferry to San Francisco to attend the opera Aida with my music class

going to conferences and debates and other school extracurricular activities by school bus

patronizing the only library in town and devouring all the Nancy Drew mysteries as well as checking out the thickest book I could find, i.e. Kristin Lavandotter, so it would last

being a part of Teddy Greathead's Girl Reserve group and going on nature walks

forming a "sorority" with my closest friends who consisted of: a Dane, a Scot, two Italians, me and a girl of English descent

participating in GAA (Girls Athletic Association) after school and then walking the two miles home, sometimes with Betty Choy

working in the store and initially, not knowing the difference between liquor and cigarette brands

being admonished by my mother not to ridicule the Filipinos, even behind their backs, when they asked for "undershorts with long sleeves"

Dad who told us how, when he was alone in the store and was approached by a robber wielding a gun, called out loudly in Chinese as if to get help from a co-worker from the back and thus scaring the robber away

being introduced to sparkling burgundy at one of the holiday

occasions

when a customer would claim he was shortchanged Dad would count the register money right then and there and settle the matter immediately

Mother and Dad never exhibited intolerance for drunks, other races, whores, etc.

Dad wanted us to go into business for ourselves so as to be independent or become a doctor or a dentist

Pauline (r.) and Rhetta, early 1940's

Dad telling me about his resentment at a Chinese teacher of his in the old country who unfairly punished Dad when Dad, due to illness, was too weak to hold up his Chinese brush correctly

being admonished to be better than, so as to be equal to, the whites

being shamed by the old Chinese who indicated that since I was Chinese "why can't you speak Chinese"

receiving a good sound education in the Vallejo school system

enjoying the sound of saying General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo Junior High School as it rolled around tongue and lips

feeling proud that Mother and Dad came to my graduation in a taxi

going over to Mare Island on Navy Day and hitting all the shops that gave the best souvenirs

coming home from school one day and seeing Mrs. Maranto, the nurse, consoling mother upon the birth of daughter #4

ministering to Rhett with her arms bandaged in white cotton stockings to prevent scratching her eczema

Dad challenging us to arithmetic problems and beating us by using his abacus

I remember as a married woman:

the roast pig with the apple in its mouth being grandly es-

corted into our kitchen from the restaurant's kitchen at Thanksgiving

Mother and Dad who never owned a car in their life giving us a car so Do and I could drive back to Vallejo on weekends from Oakland when we were going to Cal

getting a new car when married as well as the means to build a home and take vacations and buy some luxury items, all of which made a major difference in our style of living

IN SUMMARY:

FEELING GRATEFUL TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER FOR THEIR HAVING PROVIDED ME WITH A GOOD EDUCATION, GOOD EARLY WORKING EXPERIENCES, A PHILOSOPHY BY WHICH TO LIVE IN ADDITION TO OTHER RICHES OF LIFE.

Note:

[1] Ruthie is the daughter of Rose, Frank Bowen's daughter.

Some Memories

by Leland Wing

"Buddy," 1926

Por spoke only English to us, except maybe when we were very young, because we did know some Chinese (not learned in Chinese school). Gong spoke Chinese to us in simple conversations, but broke into English beyond that. Like most immigrants, he understood more than he could speak.

Serious communication with Gong was hardly ever attempted, partly because of the language barrier. When there was anything to talk about, we would talk to Por, and she would talk to Gong.

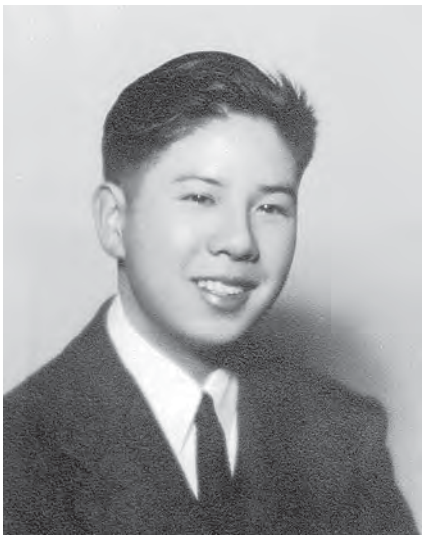
On my first day in kindergarten, Por showed me the way to school, and that was probably the last time she went near there, except to do it again for the next kid. I don't think Gong ever saw our schools. I remember once asking him if he could go to a father-son banquet (in high school) that I had to attend because I was receiving a minor award for an essay, but of course he had to work. We were all expected to be good students and there was no need for any conversations about any specifics.

I used to walk home from grammar school with a huge black kid named Billie Thomas. He was as big as our principal, who was a big man who kept leather belts hanging on his office walls. Billie used to be called into the office frequently for whippings. Since Billie used to chase off anyone who tried to pick on me, he was my "bodyguard."

When I was in grammar school, most of my friends were neighborhood Filipino kids. Freddy Randall, a half black-half Filipino who lived down the street, was my closest friend in early years. At

our junior high, we started the day with about a half hour "homeroom" class. Each homeroom fielded teams in a lunchtime intramural sports program. It was highly competitive, and each homeroom adopted a college name—St. Mary's was ours. So I had a new set of friends—jocks from the homeroom.

Later, my best friend there was a rascal named Joe Devine, who was kicked out of the local Catholic school, then our school—so he had to go to Christian Brothers (in Sacramento) where they took boarders. His favorite pastime was challenging any new kid to a fight (for no reason)—after school, over the railroad tracks. At high school my friends were either guys who played on the teams with me or "nerds" who were in the same college prep classes that I took. Out of more than 200 kids in my senior class, I know of only two who went to Cal and a few more who went to private girls colleges, such as Dominican near San Rafael.



Bud, high school graduation, 1942

The only teacher to make a special impression on me was my Spanish and journalism teacher, Mr. Hilton, but not because of teaching. He was a nationally ranked badminton player and I became his protege. We would play one weekday night at the Y in Vallejo, every Friday night at the Elks Club in Oakland and every Sunday afternoon at a gym near Golden Gate Park in SF. At the latter two sites were many ranked men and women players. Mr. Hilton went into the Navy immediately after Pearl Harbor, so that was the end of my brief career.

I had my own room from about the time I was in junior high school. Our house had three bedrooms upstairs, but the master bedroom had an adjoining alcove. I remember sleeping in a crib next to Por's bed when I was a baby, then moving over to the alcove when I was older. I think Gong slept in the other bedroom before I took it over. My relationships with my sisters were pretty normal—I fought constantly with the two closest to me in age, Pauline and

Jane, and got along fine with those with greater age differences, Do and Rhetta.

Auntie Grayce once gave Mom a picture of me taken at my one month's party—and the name on the back was "Bud." No one knows how or who named me that, but that's all anyone (not just family) ever called me, except at school and work.

Bud with Aunties Flo (l.) and Betty (r.), 1944

All of my friends were from the slums and didn't know what a birthday party was. I don't think we were considered poor, but we didn't even celebrate Christmas until we had children ourselves.

Vallejo had a very large Chinese population at one time—mainly families with kids. Most of the kids were a lot older than I was, and so I really didn't have any close Chinese friends. At one time there were enough male Chinese of ball-playing age that we fielded a softball team in the weekend Filipino league. I was too young to play, but every once in a while they put me in as a pinch hitter to get a walk (since I was so small, the pitchers couldn't find my small strike zone). We also used to have a tennis team, and again I was too young to participate, except in practice.

There were enough Chinese kids in town that we had a Chinese school—it was in the Tom house, two doors from us on Capitol. The entire upstairs of the house was set up as a school, with those old fashioned desks with fold up seats, a wall-sized blackboard, etc. The teacher came in from San Francisco every school day, and we had at least two sessions of one hour each (younger kids in first session and older kids later). This finally deteriorated until our family was the only ones to attend. By the end, I think Jane and I were the only students. I think Do was the only one to learn anything—the rest of us just goofed off. Later, I regretted it, but part of the problem was that the teaching was all formal reading and

writing. We used to memorize and recite poems or stories when we didn't even understand the words we were mouthing. There was no teaching of any conversational Chinese. Even the teaching of Mandarin, such little that we had, was done with the old fashioned "alphabet" method.

In Vallejo, I was berated constantly by the old Chinese men for not knowing Chinese. I was called the "Jew devil's son who didn't know the Chinese language." To this day I am still embarrassed when someone speaks to me in Chinese, expecting me to understand and reply.

My happiest experiences in Vallejo were playing ball in the sandlots. The city recreation department organized intra-park leagues in a large variety of sports, and there were about six parks that participated. Our "park," named Beach Park, was an empty field a block from our house, where they leveled off enough space for a softball field and a basketball court. Some of the other parks had much better facilities—concrete basketball courts, etc. There was no public swimming pool in town, and only two tennis courts at City Park.

The playground leagues were organized by weight limits, which was decidedly to our advantage because most of the Beach Park people were Filipinos, who were small for their age. Consequently, we were usually several years older and could whip the pants off the other teams. I remember beating a team 88-2 in basketball. This was in the days of center jump—you jumped center after each bucket. I was the center because I could jump higher than anyone on our team—the other team couldn't outjump me and consequently almost never got their hands on the ball. When we Beach Park kids entered junior high and had to play with bigger kids our age, none of us ever made it big. My highest level in high school was B basketball—I think the limit was 6 feet tall, 150 lbs. At Cal I played intramural team sports—basketball and touch football with both Oxford Hall and the Chinese fraternity.

Por's siblings would come once in awhile and Por rarely visited

"Bud on Leave with Uncles and Friends" at Auntie Grayce's house in Oakland: Front (l. to r.): Wingo Wye (Gay's brother), Jue Tong, cousin Wendell, Uncle Gay; Back: Uncle Bing, Uncle Johnny, Bud, Key Chinn, Uncle Henrye, 1944

them, unless someone was sick or died. For awhile I would take occasional trips on the bus to Oakland to visit with Norma/Freda,[1] and the only Christmases we celebrated were at Auntie Grayce or Auntie Flo's houses. For a short time, I used to visit with Uncle Henrye and Auntie Betty at their place in East Oakland. But my fondest memories are of the Sunday gatherings at Auntie Grayce's house.

I always assumed that because I was a son, I was expected to go to college, but I don't remember much discussion about it. You have to remember there was little communication with parents in our family. Gong did pressure me into becoming a doctor, but I don't remember it being a big deal. I believe there was no thought of the girls going to college, but Do fought long and hard and finally succeeded. Part of the deal was that she had to stay with Auntie Sue[2] at the 8th St. house (where I was born). So she commuted by bus and train for her entire stay at Cal.

After college, Gong always pressured me about taking over the store, although again I don't remember it as any big deal. After working in Los Angeles for two years, I was about at the point in that job where I was probably as high as I would go. The next logical step—my boss' job—was a jump of four grades. So I decided that would be the time to give the store a try. At least if things didn't work out, I would have given it a chance. Gong never really allowed me to do anything in the managing end, and business was down to a walk, so that's when I left for Sacramento.

Notes:

[1] Norma and Freda are the children of Gong's brother.

[2] Auntie Sue is the wife of Gong's brother.

Growing Up in a Small Town

by Janette Wing Dang

Janie, circa 1940's

I liked growing up in a small town—Vallejo certainly wasn't a pretty or charming town in any way, but somehow, knowing lots of people, being able to walk to most places (lotsa times we walked 2 miles to high school, not just to save the 5 cent bus fare, but just cuz it was easy and pleasant), and feeling safe, in spite of the drunks on lower Georgia St. and the "flasher" in the alley near us—it was better than being in a Chinatown in Oakland or SF.

We had an old wooden house in a mixed neighborhood (that I didn't realize was in a bad part of town until I hit junior high). We played kick the can and hide-'n-go-seek in the street and had wonderful 4th of July displays with the unsold fireworks from the store. We jammed 3 beds in 1 bedroom and the closet was way too tiny. Somehow we managed with just one bathroom—can't remember it was a problem. We had rats in the laundry room and rattled the door knob before going out there, hoping to scare the critters off. There was no central heating—1 heater in the living room was our source of warmth in the winter.

We had a pretty Americanized way of life, although we always had Chinese dinners, but we didn't celebrate Chinese New Year's or follow any Chinese customs. Even though the folks spoke Chinese in front of us, they weren't home that much, so although I can understand a little bit, I can't hold a conversation or do much other than order some food in Chinese. Only Do and Pauline, who lived with Auntie Sue during their college days, learned enough of the language to get by. There weren't that many Chinese families in

Vallejo and as kids, we were just supposed to say a polite "hello," then shut up.

My best friends were Caucasians and a Filipina; in my teens I would go by Greyhound to stay over with cousins in Oakland—Norma and Freda or Joyce. I envied them their piano lessons and Norma and Freda had tap dance lessons too.

Janie (r.) and cousin Joyce Wye, circa mid-1940's

The folks worked hard at the Busy Bargain Corner—til 9 PM at nite—can't remember if we closed on Sunday—I think so, but we didn't do anything together as a family—no outings or picnics, vacations. Even so, I think I felt we were a solid family unit and would help each other out. Dad was a remote father; he never talked to us much, although he joked a little in later years. Somehow we were instilled with a respect for education and we all were able to go to college, without having to work our own way thru.

I was a latch key kid until I was older, then worked at the "BBC" in my spare time—I usually read a book at the counter when it wasn't busy, even though I was supposed to be straightening stock or dusting. Business boomed during the war years cuz we carried work clothes, liquor—we employed as many as 12 people for paydays. I was vaguely aware of the gambling in the back, but of course, we weren't supposed to talk about that.

Anyway—I think I had a happy childhood, nothing remarkable, just ordinary, but secure.

Recollections

by Loretta Wing Ah-Tye

Rhetta, circa late 1930's

I was always aware that we were Chinese growing up in a mixed neighborhood. My two best friends in early elementary school were a Filipina and a Japanese girl. Later, my girlfriends were all Caucasian, and I wished I weren't "different." Mother and Dad always spent most of their time at the store, which we nicknamed "The Busy Bargain Corner." The store was their life, and therefore a big part of our lives. I remember Mother previously worked for the Vallejo Dollar Store and vaguely recall her wearing a green smock. I had to take my naps on the blankets in the lower part of that store where customers hardly ever went.

My strongest memories of the store were during the war years when we had so many customers on pay days that Dad hired a bunch of part-time helpers, who also worked regular hours at Mare Island, just to assist in the crush when the workers would stream over from the ferry and buy a dollar's worth of merchandise (it couldn't be cigarettes) so that they could cash their paychecks. My role was to let the customers out the side or delivery entrance door to ease the traffic flow.

I also remember vividly three robberies. The first time entrance was gained through the skylight, which was directly over the cash register in the center of the store. The biggest and most professional was when there was an empty store next to us whereby the thieves cut a hole in the wall and brought their own acetylene torches to open the safe. Another time Dad was alone in the store and someone tied his hands and told him to stay in the toilet until he made his getaway.

One funnier episode was when Mother suspected one of two guys had stolen a shirt and stuffed it under his jacket. He was then looking at pants and Mother offered to hold them up to him, at the same time pushing his jacket up. When the shirt dropped out, Dad got so mad he started to pummel him, and though the young men could have done bodily harm to him, they were such amateurs that they ran out of the store.

Mother always spoke English to us, and as the youngest listening to four older siblings who only spoke English among ourselves, I learned the least Chinese, which I have always regretted and felt self-conscious about. Dad's dialect was "Lung Doo," but Mother didn't speak it, so they conversed in "Sam Yup."

My recollections about Mother's family, who lived mostly in Oakland, were that I envied them their "American way of life." They had cars, well-kept homes with real lawns, both parents spoke English, they went on vacations, etc. In contrast, we never had a car, we used to wash clothes by hand on a washboard and hang the wash out on a clothesline, there were weeds in our front and backyard, we never went anywhere as an entire family, etc.

I remember being invited to a neighbor girl's birthday party and having such a good time that I complained I'd never had a birthday party. So for my 9th birthday, my mother let me have a party and it was a dud. She was working, and she made Janie supervise. She bought me this pink round two layer cake which wasn't a decorated birthday cake at all. I was not allowed to have candles and no ice cream because it was December!

I got a lot of hand-me-down clothes from Norma and Elfreda, cousins on my dad's side. When they were growing up, they had every kind of lesson available, such as tap dancing, piano, ballet, etc. They had fancy clothes and got to use make-up when they performed. I liked going out to the big city of Oakland and riding the escalators at Capwell's and the trolley cars.

We never followed Chinese traditions like getting lay see or celebrating Chinese New Year. It was unusual to sit down to dinner

together as a family. Mother would open the store in the morning, and when Dad came in later, she would make the rounds of grocery store, fish market, bank, etc., always on foot. She would fix dinner for Dad, Mr. Lowe or whoever was working for us, then go back to the store while they walked the three blocks home to eat. Mother came home about 9:00 and Dad would close up the store. They always seemed to operate in reverse of each other so the store could always be manned by one of them.

Rhetta and her mom, circa 1940

Mother always bought fresh groceries everyday as she has never believed in frozen foods. She only used the top part of the range; she never roasted or baked. Our Thanksgiving turkey was sent down by Greyhound bus from Mr. Yun. It was then roasted by Harvey's father, Mr. Tom, until he passed away. Then the Smiley Man from New Home restaurant roasted it for us.

I was pretty naive about the goings on next door. During the war, I do remember being told not to open the door, but if I looked out the window and saw any blacks knocking, I was to yell, "Go next door!" There was music going on and the sign around the corner was "Bud Green's Cafe." I always thought his wife was Caucasian, as she had dyed blonde hair or a wig and always wore sunglasses.

In our three bedroom house, Bud got a bedroom to himself. I slept in a cot in my parents' room until Do went away to college. I then got her bed, which was one of three in the girls' bedroom. When Do came home on weekends, she had to sleep on the living room couch. We had only one bathroom and I remember the old pull-chain toilet with the wooden box of water high on the wall.

I always knew there was a world outside of Vallejo, and I think we all improved our lifestyle once we left home. Mother and Dad worked hard, and it was fortuitous that the city development plan enabled them to sell the house and store and enjoy retirement.

The Fourth Generation

The fourth generation, my dad and his sisters, grew up during the depression, but came to adulthood, embarked on careers and produced families at the height of American prosperity and power from the 1940s to the 1970s. They employed their family heritage, individual talent and extraordinary energy to make the most of it.

While each of the Vallejo Wings is a unique personality, they have nonetheless traversed a remarkably common life path. All graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in the first significant wave of Chinese-American college graduates. All married American-born Chinese college graduates. All but two are engineers and all of the men became successful professionals with long careers in major corporations or government. All of the families helped to break color barriers in middle class neighborhoods. Once married, all the females were housewives taking principal responsibility for raising energetic children and stable families of 2-4 kids, 17 in all. Remarkably, there is not a single divorce.

Some of the males hit the "glass ceiling," that invisible color bar to the top levels of business and professions, and were thereby stopped short of what their ability and work ethic might otherwise have brought. Yet, overwhelmingly, the Vallejo Wings and their spouses have reason to believe that they have fulfilled their generation's hopes and aspirations. They are among the lucky few who largely achieved as adults what they must have hoped for as high school kids. All have now retired in remarkably good health. In short, each built on the achievements of Gong-Gong and Por-Por, opened new opportunities and vistas for their children, and reproduced the Bowen/Wing family cohesion.

Standing (l. to r.): Bud, Del, Perry, Kenow, Johnny; Seated: Lily, Rhetta, Fung Wing, Mary Wing, Do, Pauline, Janie, 1971

PART V
REMINISCENCES OF THE FIFTH GENERATION

Gong-Gong with Grandchildren in Vallejo
Back (l. to r.): Robbie, Karen, Gong-Gong, Day; Front: Moy, Shelley, Bob, 1952

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Thoroughly Modern Mary

by Linda Wing

Por with my dad at San Jose's Alum Rock Park, 1926

My grandmother, Mary Bowen Wing, was born in 1902. During her long life, Por has seen the creation of the car and the computer, as well as the building of the Bay Bridge and the BART. She has witnessed the fall of the last emperor of China and the election of the first baby boomer president of the United States. The 1906 earthquake caused Por's parents to move the family from San Francisco to the East Bay; but Por remained safe in her Oakland apartment when the Loma Prieta earthquake hit in 1989. A native-born American, Por lost her citizenship in 1920 when she married Gong, an "alien ineligible for naturalization" under the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. She regained her citizenship when the Act was finally repealed in 1943.

Por has not only watched the history of contemporary America unfold, but she has also enjoyed its many dimensions. As a teenager, she loved to go with her cousins Rose, Liz, and Corinne to dances organized by an East Bay Chinese club.

Por followed fashion. One of my favorite photos of her shows Por on an outing with my dad to San Jose's Alum Rock Park in 1926. Her hair is marcelled, and she's sporting a very stylish dress and high heels with straps.

Por played baseball as an elementary student at Dewey School in Oakland. When my father was a child, she taught him how to play ping pong on the dining room table in Vallejo. After the kids

were all out of the house, Por worked out in exercise classes at the Vallejo Y and competed in the Y's volleyball and badminton tournaments. She played tennis at the Vallejo city park; and to this day, she knows who is top seeded at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open.

Even though she was a working wife and mother who never seemed to take a day off, Por often traveled from Vallejo to San Francisco to see the Broadway musicals put on by the Civic Light Opera at the Curran Theater. After Por and Gong retired to San Francisco, I remember taking a bus from Stanford to the Sacramento Street apartment. Por and I ate lunch with Gong, and then she and I went to the 1965 opening of the movie version of "The Sound of Music."

Por and me, New Orleans, 1948

Today, whenever I visit her, Por talks as informatively about issues such as the incidence of preservatives in frozen food as she does about extended family news. In the small space afforded by the postcards she sends me, she always manages to cover a gamut of topics. The latest one alerts me to the upcoming postage hike, informs me that Boston has not had as much snowfall this year as Norway, mentions trips taken by two family members, and contains a reminiscence about the New Year parades in San Francisco Chinatown!

I have always considered myself fortunate to have a grandmother who is active and up-to-date. In my mind, she is a thoroughly modern, 20th century woman.

Gong-Gong and Por-Por

by Karen Lou

Gong, circa late 1960's

I always think of Gong-Gong in that recliner in the Vallejo house living room. Were there really doilies on the arms and head rest? He sat myopically in that chair with a flask of "cough medicine" next to his right side, that pop-up toothpick dispenser and maybe some cigars. He's wearing a grey/light blue plaid flannel shirt, maybe from his store, and some greyish vest and pants with slippers with open heels. With all of us grandkids literally circling him since his chair was in the junction of the living/dining room, making his recliner an oasis amid the running, yelling kids rediscovering their cousins. The Wing women talking and cooking behind in the kitchen, the husbands reluctantly socializing among themselves. After dinner Gong-Gong would call out, "Hey you, Goofy." I mean really, there were a lot of names to remember. Maybe Gong-Gong wanted another thermos of tea. Or he would all of a sudden give out a silver dollar for being a good kid and clearing the dinner table. But it seemed like the nearest grandkid would always promptly respond to that old nearsighted patriarch with as much respect as you could expect out of a fourth generation Americanized kid. After all, it was Gong-Gong. Funny how Por-Por did all the food and organization but somehow Gong-Gong was always equally important in my mind. How do those old Chinese guys pull that off?

I remember one week being shipped off to Vallejo for some reason. I got to go to The Store, read lots of comics I couldn't read at home, drink soft drinks, and scurry behind the cash register when

someone actually came in to buy something. I followed Gong-Gong and Por-Por around when they dusted everything off and generally got in the way. I don't think I ever saw either of them in p.j.s or without their glasses. Did I remember to say "Thank you"? Thanks, Por-Por for taking care of me.

It seems like I've known Por-Por forever and she's always looked the same. I think of her in Vallejo, fussing in that big house, wiping the counters down in the kitchen, getting ready for the next meal. I remember going to their apartment at Sacramento and Stockton Streets, fighting for a parking place, then standing away from the door so Por-Por could see me from her window upstairs, yelling "Por-Por, it's me, Karen." She was always fussing at me to "watch my handbag." Even if I rode up on my boyfriend's Vespa with a backpack, I got those strict instructions to "watch my handbag." In Vallejo she was surrounded by her daughters. I never quite realized where Uncle Bud came in, but then when I grew up I thought all puppies were male and all kitties were female. I can never remember either Por-Por or Gong-Gong actually walking up the stairs in the Vallejo house, even when I spent the night. How was Por-Por connected to those fancy dresses in the trunks that we girls got to dress up in? Whose dressy shoes did we clunk around in? Did Por-Por ever have a girlish figure and wear shoes that were too tight? Did she buy those dresses just for us kids? We were spoiled every other way. Yes, through those rose colored glasses, Por-Por has always looked the same to me. Por-Por, I'm watching my handbag.

Going Back to Gong-Gong's Village

by Shelley Wong

Gong's relatives in Ha Juk, China, circa 1968

Gong-Gong left China during the Ching Dynasty. The district he left was called Heungshan ("fragrant mountain") now called Chungshan. In those days, many Chinese left Heungshan to make a living in foreign lands; in some villages as many as half the men left the villages. Their hope was to make money, send remittances back home, and return eventually to the village.

However, Gong-Gong never returned to China. But in 1972, sixty-five years after Gong-Gong had left China, I was lucky enough to return to his birth place.

I had been studying Chinese in Hong Kong when Nixon made his trip to China, and I was able to visit China with one of the first Chinese-American student groups. We toured major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, as well as Yenan and the model commune Taichai, visiting factories, schools, communes and many women's associations. After touring for six weeks, we split up to visit the villages of our grandparents. Later we wrote a book through the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA called *Going Back* which focused on describing the changes in the villages we visited.

I wanted to visit Gong-Gong's village, but didn't know the

name of the village. I didn't even know Gong-Gong's full Chinese name. All I knew was the English "Mr. Fung Wing" and that he was from Lung Doo. Based on the little information I had, Comrade Choi went to the people's communes in Lung Doo and asked, does anyone have a relative named Fung Wing who went to the U.S. before 1911, during the Ching Dynasty? They passed the information to the big brigade leaders who passed it to the small brigades who passed it to the work teams. The next day Comrade Choi pulled out a black and white photo of a young, handsome, rather dapper man in his 20's.

"Is this your grandfather?" I thought of Gong-Gong (then in his eighties). I looked at the picture. I had never seen a picture of Gong-Gong as a young man. Was that Gong-Gong? I couldn't be sure.

"It could be Gong-Gong," I answered.

The following day Comrade Choi took me to visit Gong-Gong's first cousin, a man in his late sixties. He had been born after Gong-Gong left for the U.S. He lived in the house that Gong-Gong was born in.

They did a lot of things in the old ways, probably not much different than when Gong-Gong left 65 years ago. They cooked with straw, embroidered and made toys by hand. His children showed me the toys they had made. But so many things had changed since Gong-Gong left. Revolutions had occurred, foreign invaders ousted, and poor people like Gong-Gong's cousin had a new sense of self-respect. He said before Liberation, he couldn't even support himself, but now he had a family of nine! He was a man in his sixties with young children, because he hadn't been able to afford a family until he was in his forties. Proudly he explained that his children all went to school. I met the 24 year old, the 8 year old and the 19 year old.

Still not quite sure if I had the right family, I accompanied Gong-Gong's cousin for a walk around the village. Gong-Gong's cousin said that before Liberation he had no land and watched ducks

for the landlord. Five-to-six hundred people starved to death. There were gangster secret societies that hauled people off for labor. There were different currencies, and each time new money was issued, the old money became worthless. They pawned seven blankets and furniture for rice. During the war with Japan, his mother starved to death. She gave what little grain she had to him so that they wouldn't both die. That struck me pretty hard. His mother gave him life twice, the second time at the expense of her own.

Everything he had said was in Chinese, but as we walked around the village, he pointed to a big house and whispered to me that that was "Susie's" mother's house. He had gone to school with "Susie." "Was Susie from Australia?" I asked. When I confirmed that "Susie" was from Australia, I knew I was indeed talking to Gong-Gong's cousin! I had never known that Aunt Sue, Gong-Gong's sister-in-law, had lived in the village.

After that, I referred to Comrade Choi from the China Travel Service as "Detective Choi, Private Eye." I had arrived in Saakai the Chungshan county capital on August 9th, not knowing my grandfather's village or even his Chinese name, and within three days Comrade Choi had located Gong-Gong's village and relatives!

Gong & Por

by Bob Wing

Gong and me, 1951

When I think of Gong-Gong, I always imagine him with a satisfied look on his face, like the cat that just swallowed the canary, perhaps puffing on a big cigar or with a glass of Lancers or Black and White at hand. He just always seemed to me to be happy with himself, his wife and his life.

I will never forget a ritual that all of the kids in my family went through with Gong-Gong. At each visit to Vallejo house, he would summon one of us for a chat, usually after a satisfying dinner when he was happily perched in his favorite chair puffing on a big Havana. The other three of us would always give this visit's chosen "victim" a knowing look of sympathy, as he or she dutifully shuffled over for "the question."

Upon arrival, Gong-Gong would flash a massive wad of $20 bills and, casually ask, "Bobby, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

We all knew that if only we responded, "I want to be a doctor," we would be instantly rich. Much to Gong-Gong's chagrin, and our financial disadvantage, none of us ever uttered the desired words. I would sheepishly reply that I didn't know, or maybe an engineer like Dad, or something noncommittal. I doubt any of us had a clue. But Gong-Gong never pressed hard. He would simply state how he hoped we would become doctors, replace the money in his pocket, and gently release us to more childish concerns. We knew it wouldn't be long before we had another chance at Gong-Gong's $64,000 question.

Another lasting memory is our family's trip to Disneyland with Gong-Gong and Por-Por. I can't remember what year it was. I was, however, old enough to sense impending disaster when Mom and Dad coaxed Gong-Gong into driving the Autopia with me as passenger. I was not old enough to have my protest paid any heed.

Sure enough, not 50 feet from the starting line, Gong-Gong, who never drove in his life, steered us smack into, and half over, the retaining curb. Gong-Gong's smile never left his face, but I was mortified as our car teetered between sidewalk and road. After what seemed like a lifetime to me, the attendants realized Gong-Gong could not right us, and came to the rescue. But even they could not extricate us. Thankfully, they managed to convince Gong-Gong that maybe continuing wasn't such a good idea, so we were all spared the rest of the tour.

Christmas in Vallejo (l. to r.): Gong (holding me), Moy, Day, 1951

One of the main things to look forward to when we visited Vallejo was the food. I still remember the tomato beef chow mein we ordered out for in Vallejo as the best I have tasted. Just a little bit crispy in places, and not too much sauce.

Even more I remember always anxiously awaiting the moment when Gong-Gong or Por-Por would break out the maraschino cherries and macadamia nuts. I absolutely craved both and would greedily go after them, even if I had just downed a huge portion of chow mein.

"No fuss, no muss." That is one of Por-Por's favorite sayings and one of her watchwords. Por-Por is definitely "low-maintenance," a person with simple tastes and desires, who speaks directly and wastes few emotions, and who is easy to be with.

Not that she doesn't have opinions. In fact, Por-Por is one of the best informed people I know. She reads the newspaper from

cover to cover every day, clips interesting articles, and enjoys a conversation on the widest range of topics, from sports to business to science to the latest scandal. She has ideas about all of them and expresses them freely. She asks no agreement, will not argue, but will definitely say what she has to say.

One of the things that continues to delight me is the way Por-Por ushers me out the door, pretty much at the moment that we have said what we have to say, on every visit. Por-Por is definitely not one for clinging on to visitors. She has things to read, programs to watch, things to do, thoughts to think. And she will make sure she is "no fuss, no muss" and really doesn't want you to be, either.

Por and me, 1951

Por-Por's attitude about God is typical. She was not really religious at all until fairly recently. Now Por-Por says she believes in God, but does not go to church or read the bible. Every morning she asks God's help to have a "good, safe day." And every night before retiring she thanks God for her day. She thinks of God as being available to anyone who needs help, to ask to help them stay healthy and happy and to have a good, safe day.

Por-Por is one of the few people that is in my mind almost all the time. Somehow she has become one of my consciences, part of my code of behavior, morality and judgment. I can't break this down to any real specifics, but it is true. I may not meet Por-Por's standard, but I, too believe in "no fuss, no muss."

Because of the example of my Mom's parents and my Dad's, and now of Mom and Dad themselves, the titles Gong-Gong and Por-Por have taken on great honor and affection in my family. As Americanized as I am, I would like nothing better than to someday be a Gong-Gong.

Fields of Dreams

by Butch Wing

October 1962. We're sitting on the edge of our seats, going crazy with 45,000 fans. Lower deck, third baseline, two kids lucky enough to be at the 7th game of the Giants-Yankees World Series. . . even if we were on the "visiting team" side of brand new Candlestick Park. My brother Bob next to me, thanks to Uncle Henrye and Uncle Hector who brought us to the game. (Were Moy and Day also there, sitting elsewhere at Candlestick? And getting lost trying to find the car after the game?)

Two outs, bottom of the 9th. Giants down, 2-1. It's the last chance for the Giants to win the World Series. Mateo Alou drags a daring bunt down the first base line for a single. The Giants' hopes are still alive. We can hardly breathe. We're yelling and screaming and jumping up and down with Uncle Henrye and Uncle Hector. Willie Mays steps up to the plate (Bob's favorite player; in fact, his bedspread, complete with the Giants Logo designed by Mom, has the #24 on it!). Mays bloops a pop fly down the right field line. Is Maris going to get to it? No, it drops just inside the line, spinning into the bullpen. Alou rounds third base and speeds toward home plate with the tying run. Stop! says the third base coach.

We can't believe it. Two outs, two on. McCovey lumbers up to the plate; the stadium was silent as can be. Alou dances off of third base, Mays bouncing off of second representing the winning run. Come on, Big Mac. Knock'em in.

Flash to Oakland Chinatown. Circa 1930. It's a hot, summer day at one of Oakland's many baseball diamonds. Who's that I see on the mound. Is that Uncle Henrye, kicking his leg high and firing his fastball down the middle? And his battery mate? It's Uncle Hector peering out behind the screen of the catcher's mask, squatting behind the plate and setting a big target for his pitcher. I gaze around the diamond. Bowens at practically every position. And look, there's my Dad. He loves to play, but he's too young. Today, Bud is the bat boy for the Wa

Sung team. (If only I could pinch hit one time; I'll show them what I can do!)

As kids, we grew up with baseball and sport. Pop playing catch with us in the middle of the street on Roger Way practically every night. Playing midget league softball on the weekends. Summer times filled with Little League and Babe Ruth games. Playing hookie from school, and going with Mom to Seals Stadium. Bob and I spending night after night, drilling each other on baseball stats. . . what number is Felipe Alou? How many RBI's does Cepeda have? How many wins did Marichal have in 1965? (Joel, we knew all of the stats for every player in baseball, the box scores of every game, before computers!)

And long after Mom told us to turn out the lights, be quiet and go to bed, we'd turn the radio down low and listen to the final innings of the Giants game. Mom really didn't know we were still up listening to the game, did she?

Now I know where our love of baseball and sports comes from Oakland Chinatown's Baseball Pioneers. Bowens at every corner of the diamond. Dad playing basketball at the Y—"I may be small, but I'm quicker, faster and smarter than them. . . . And if they get mad at me, I can out-run them, too." "How's your Mama," Cepeda saying to me when we went down to the dugout to get autographs—My mom, the Giant's greatest fan, and a sports pioneer herself as the first woman basketball coach of Sacramento midget leagues. Por hitting the badminton birdie. Auntie Flo smashing a forehand down the line.

. . . . and the wind-up, the pitch. McCovey smashes a blistering line drive toward right field. Alou streaks to the plate. Mays angles toward third. Bob, Uncle Henrye, Uncle Hector and I leap to our feet, our hopes higher than McCovey's line drive. The crowd leaps to its feet, a unison gasp rushes through Candlestick. And then Yankee second baseman Bobby Richardson leaps for McCovey's ball, and. . . .

Oh, well. We all know how that story ends. Thanks for the memories, Uncle Henrye. Uncle Hector. Wa Sung Baseball Pioneers. See you on the tennis courts, Auntie Flo. (And Day and Moy. See you back at Uncle Henrye's car after the game. Don't get lost.)

Ping Pong Balls

by Kent Wong

When I was a young boy, every year we would take an annual pilgrimage to our grandparents' home in Vallejo, California. We would go during the holidays, and this trip always seemed like a long journey in our family station wagon. My parents would sit in the front seat while the four kids scrambled around in the back.

I have only vague memories of these family gatherings. There were always lots of cousins, lots of uncles and aunts, and the annual inspection by the grown-ups of how much the children had grown, who looks like whom, and the usual updates on family activities. There was always plenty of food, and it was an occasion where you could make a pig out of yourself and be praised for having such a good appetite.

My Gong-Gong, as we called my grandfather, owned a dry good store in Vallejo. I learned years later that he also ran a separate business in the back of the store.

When we were young children, we had a ping pong table in our family room. Every year, when we would visit Vallejo, my Gong-Gong would give us a big box of ping pong balls. Each ping pong ball had a big black number on it. I never quite understood why Gong-Gong had so many ping pong balls to begin with, nor why they had big black numbers on them. When I asked my mom why each ping pong ball had a number, she replied, "Oh, that's so you can tell them apart."

Only later did I learn that these ping pong balls were used for a "Keno"-style gambling game that my grandfather ran in the back of his store. This revelation was shared with the grandchildren long after my grandparents left Vallejo.

My mother also told us that when she was growing up, she would deliver a box of whiskey to the police station in Vallejo during the holidays. My Gong-Gong always had a good relationship with the police, and it was his way of expressing his thanks to them for not raiding his gambling establishment.

Recollections

by Dana Ah-Tye Jung

Gong-Gong had Wrigley's gum in a stand on top of the counter (all types in the metal-tiered stand) and he gave us some when we were in the store. I remember looking up and it seemed quite high. I must have been a few years old and gum must have been an occasional treat at that age.

I remember the apartment at 906 Sacramento Street better and Gong-Gong padding around in his sleepers and bathrobe in the morning and saying: "Good morning" to us, eating his one egg sunny side up, toast and sausage. Reading his newspaper and smoking cigars and drinking his glass of scotch at night. Por-Por cooking our favorite Chinese food and so alert and sharp, remembering what everybody in the family was doing currently.

Gong and Por, 1966

Financing a Trip to Disneyland

by Mitch Ah-Tye

My most vivid memory of Gong-Gong was when I was five years old. We were going to Disneyland. So Gong-Gong sat me in front of his easy chair and laid out four bills on the footstool—$1, $5, $10 and a $20 bill. He said, "You can have any two here you want."

Now, I was in a moral dilemma. Did he want me to be modest and choose the $1 and the $5? Or should I choose the $5 and $10 for a compromise? So, I thought for a fast moment then said, "I'll take these two!" and promptly pointed to the $10 and $20 bills.

Gong exclaimed, "Good boy!" And that was my first lesson in money management.

The Fifth Generation

My cousins and I were born into an America made proud and powerful by its victory in World War II. We are baby boomers who grew up in 1950s-style white middle-class neighborhoods made up of professionals and small business people who were trying to shed their ethnic hyphenations. Most of us came of age in the 1960s of mass civil rights protests and Black Power, the Vietnam War and the movement against it, student unrest, flower children, drug and sexual experimentation and the women's movement. All of us are hitting middle age when homelessness and crime are reaching tragic proportions, the gap between the haves and have nots is growing, and the pace of technological change is astonishing.

Like the unusual decade that shaped us, few of us have followed a traditional path. All of us went to college, but almost all are a step or two down economically from our parents. Especially for the 1960s kids, establishing stable professional careers took a back seat to political activism, artistic commitments or alternative lifestyles. Raising families has only recently become a high priority, and only for some. Like those before us, our generation is also marked by tremendous energy, but much of this energy and talent has found unusual outlets.

We were among the founders of the Asian American progressive movement, have helped to establish student, community, labor and political organizations and to start Asian American Studies programs. We have worked for justice and peace locally and nationally, and even internationally, among Asian Americans and other peoples alike. When we see a good fight, apparently some of us must join in.

Others have followed their artistic callings with equal energy from country western and classical music to graphic and interior arts. We also teach, work with computers, try to make people healthy, and build. We run the gamut from diehard activists and starving

Christmas at Vallejo house: Top: Gigi; next step (l. to r.): Karen, Butch, Moy, Bob; next step: Day, Barry, Robbie, Kent, 1957

artists to yuppies, DINCs (double income, no children) and different combinations thereof.

Out of seventeen cousins, only Shelley speaks Chinese (more of us speak Spanish). Nine of us are married and nine have children, but they are not the same nine. None of the females are married to Asians; all of the males are, but only Mitchell married a Chinese American. We include single parents and adopted parents, divorcers and second-time winners. All but one of our eleven kids are multiethnic, many are biracial. Our family now includes Japanese, Vietnamese, Koreans, African Americans, whites as well as Chinese, and a rainbow of combinations.

We are, in short, much like a lot of the rest of our generation. An interesting bunch, we are not easy to sum up. I think I'll leave that to our kids and our parents.

What's in a (Nick)Name (6)?

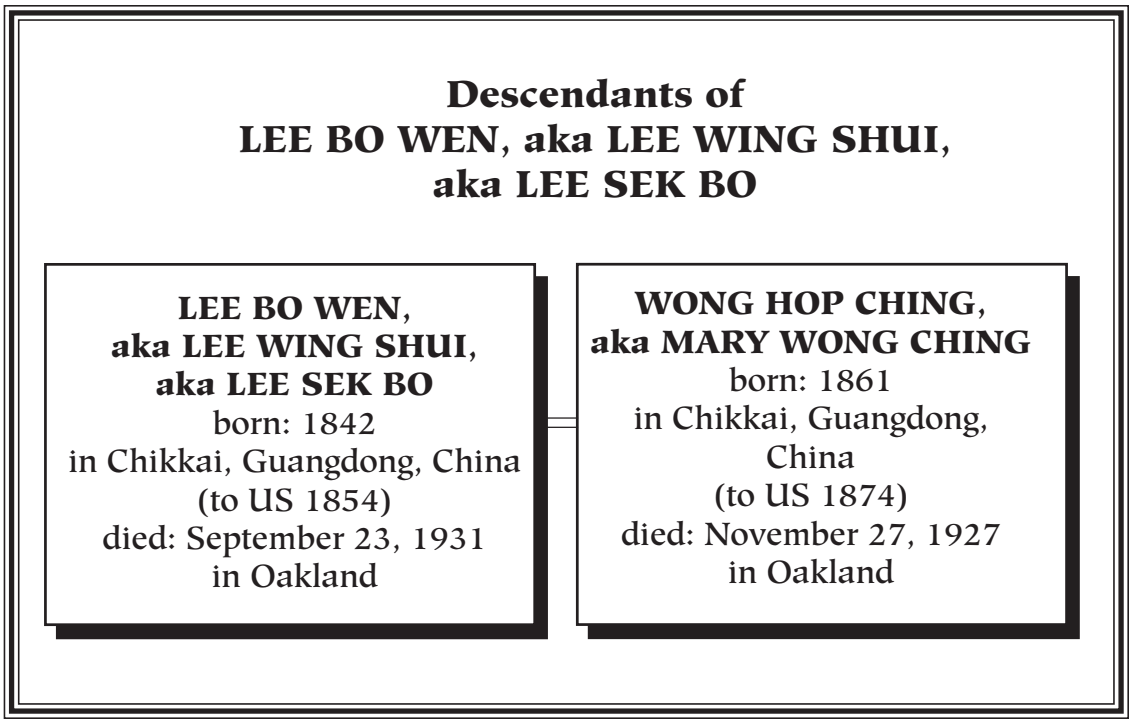
I thought I would include a list of family nicknames, to make sure we could all figure out who's who. Then it struck me that Chinese, or at least Chinese Americans, seem to have a penchant for nicknaming. (The biggest nicknamers that I know of are Filipinos—even their most revered historical figures and statespersons are commonly known by childhood nicknames.) Perhaps for Chinese Americans, this is an offshoot of the traditional Chinese custom of people giving and taking on additional names. (See "What's in a Name (1)?" above.)

At any rate, here is a list of family nicknames or aka's. It starts with the first generation proceeding to the fifth generation.

Lee Bo Wen, Lee Bowen, Lee Wing Shui, Lee Sek Bo
Mary Wong Ching, Wong Hop Ching
James Bowen, Lee Quoon Lin, Lee Fat Wah, Lee Ji Shut
Mary Bowen Wing, M
Elsye Bowen Won, E
Florence Bowen Eng, Flo
Jennye Bowen Eng, Jaye
Wendel Wye, Pinky
Ralston Eng, Rally
Dolores Wing Wong, Do
Leland Wing, Bud
Janette Wing Dang, Janie
Loretta Wing Ah-Tye, Rhetta or Rhet
Linda Wing, Day
Laraine Wing, Moy
Loren Wing, Bob
Allison Dang, Gigi
Duane Wong, Pudgy
Lyle Wing, Butch
Evan Dang, Nik

Por with great-granddaughters (sixth generation)
Josina (l.) and Teri, March 1992

PART VI
THE BOWEN/WING FAMILY TREE



By Leland Wing

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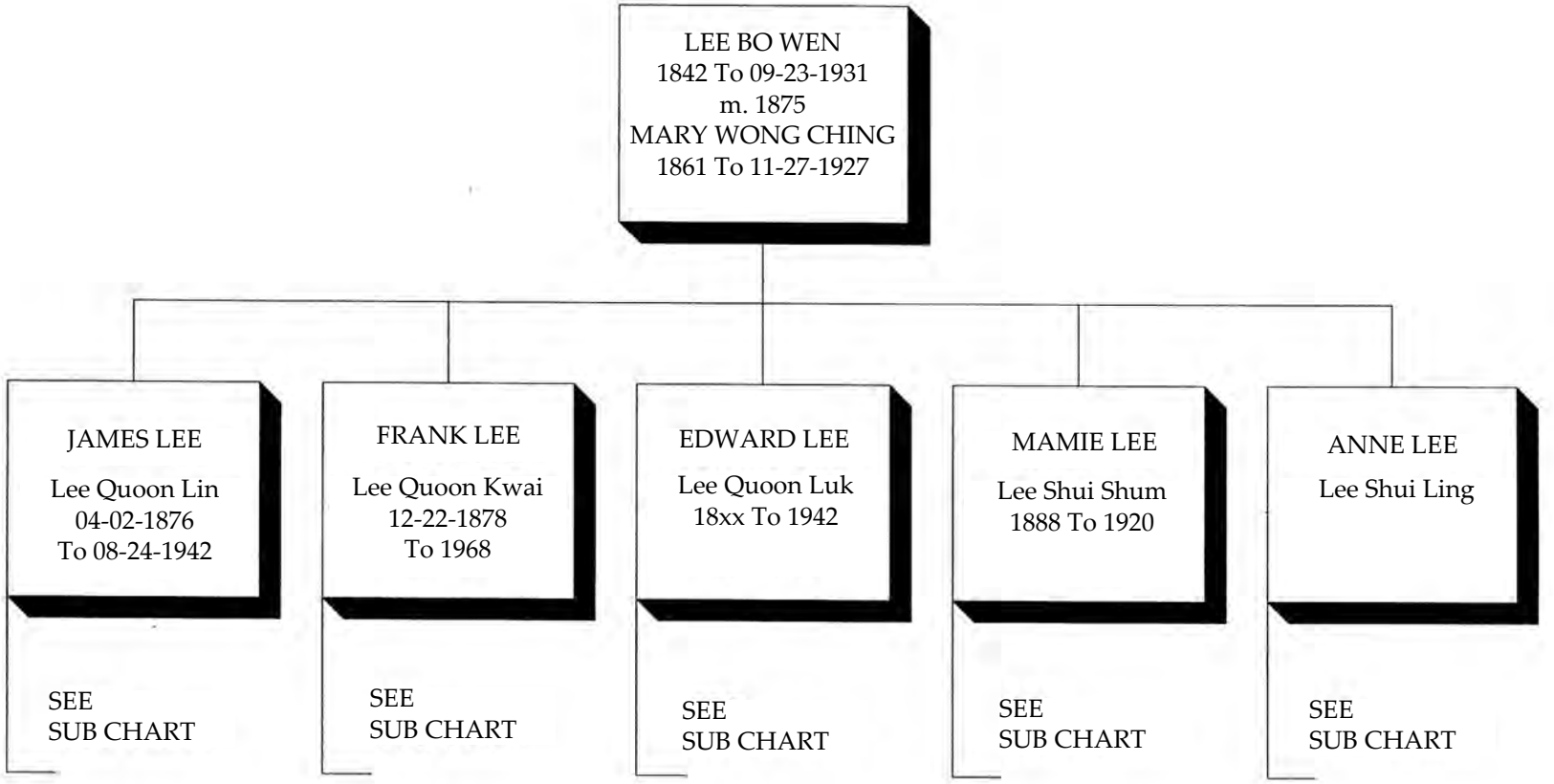
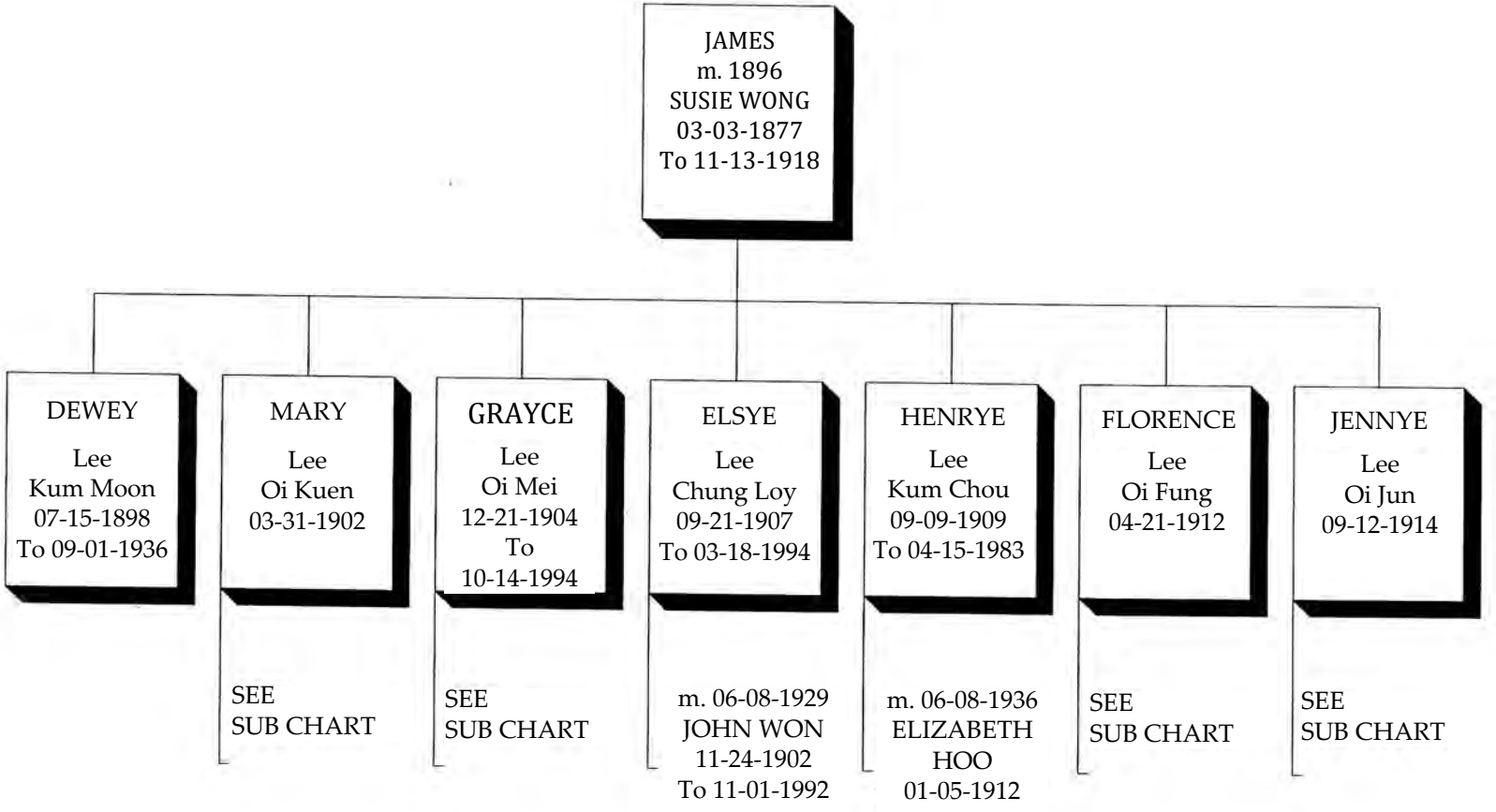
BOWEN

LEE


LEE BO WEN
1842 To 09-23-1931
m. 1875
MARY WONG CHING
1861 To 11-27-1927
JAMES LEE
Lee Quoon Lin
04-02-1876
To 08-24-1942
SEE
SUB CHART
FRANK LEE
Lee Quoon Kwai
12-22-1878
To 1968
SEE
SUB CHART
EDWARD LEE
Lee Quoon Luk
18xx To 1942
SEE
SUB CHART
MAMIE LEE
Lee Shui Shum
1888 To 1920
SEE
SUB CHART
ANNE LEE
Lee Shui Ling
SEE
SUB CHART

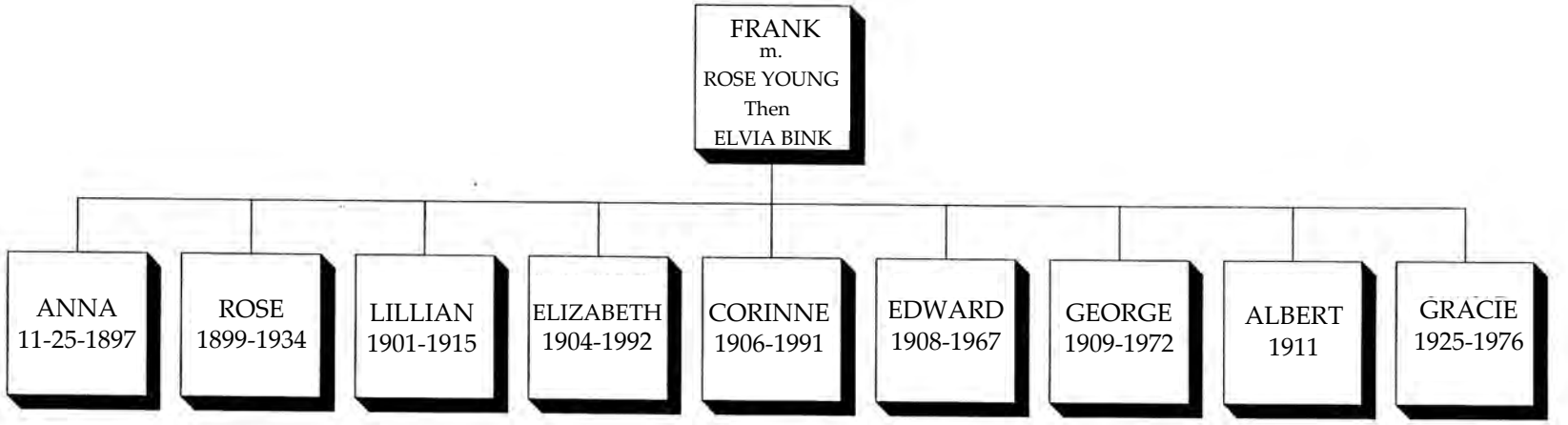
BOWEN

LEE - JAMES



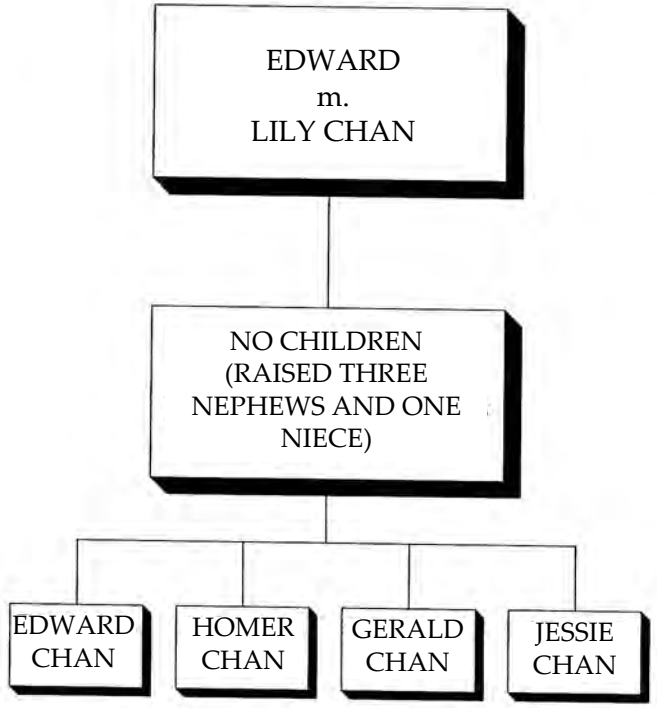
BOWEN

LEE - FRANK



BOWEN

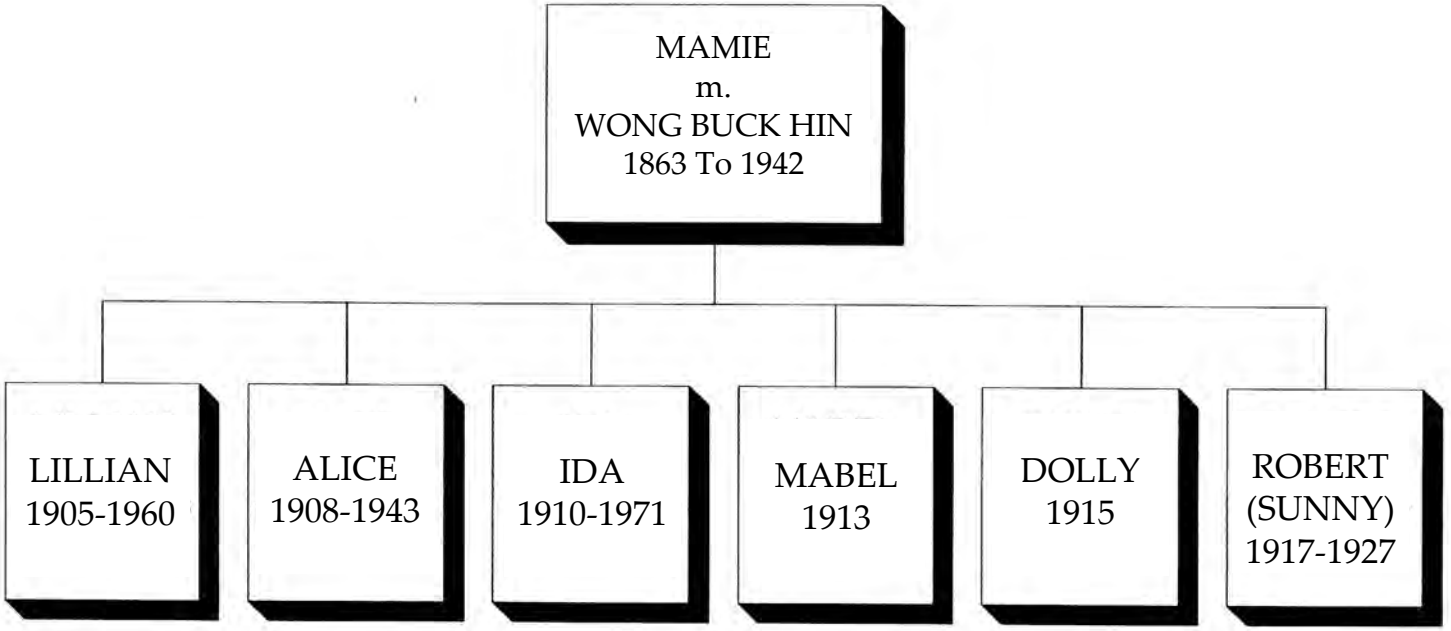
LEE - EDWARD



SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION

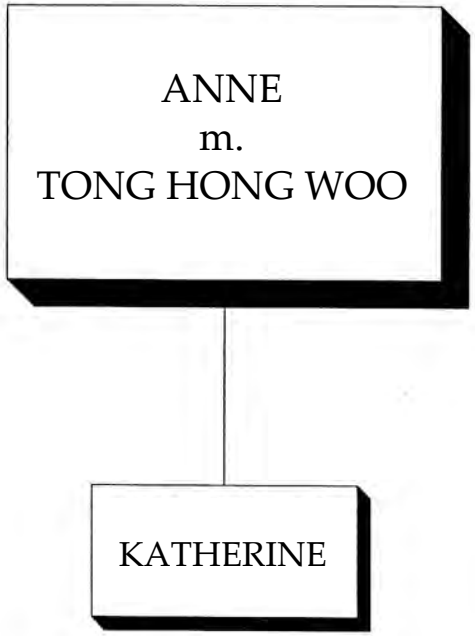
BOWEN

LEE - MAMIE



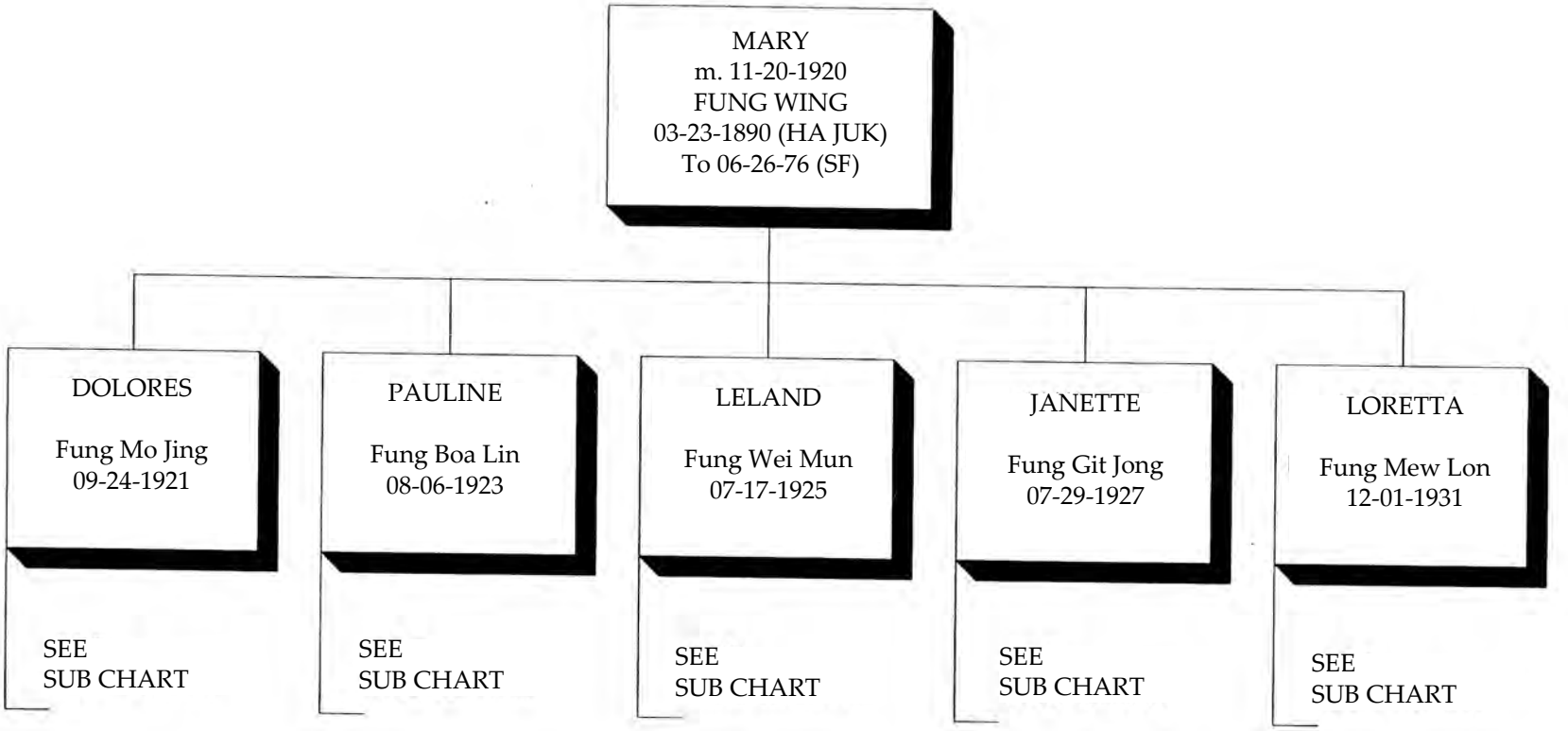
BOWEN

LEE - ANNE



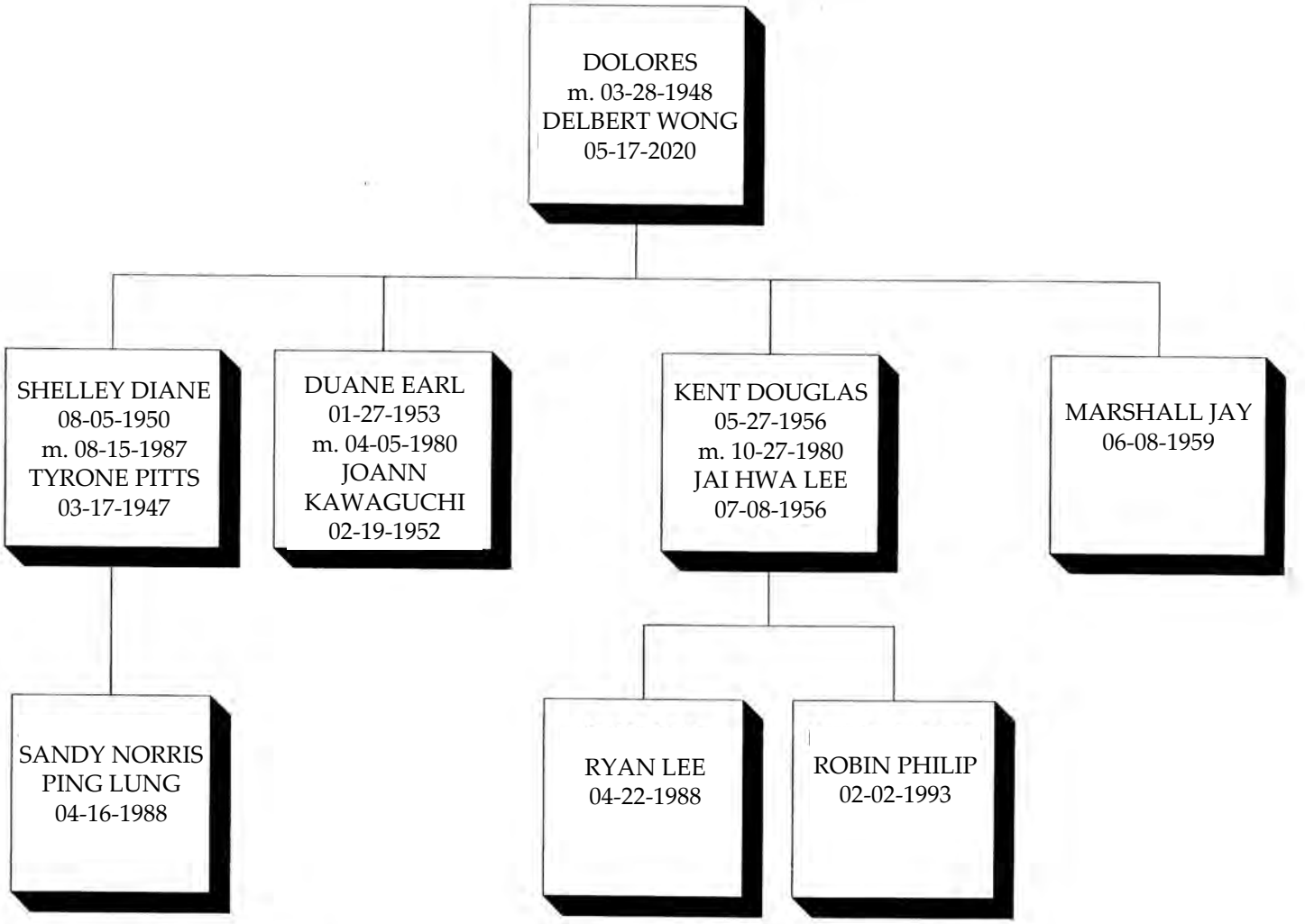
BOWEN

LEE - JAMES - MARY



BOWEN

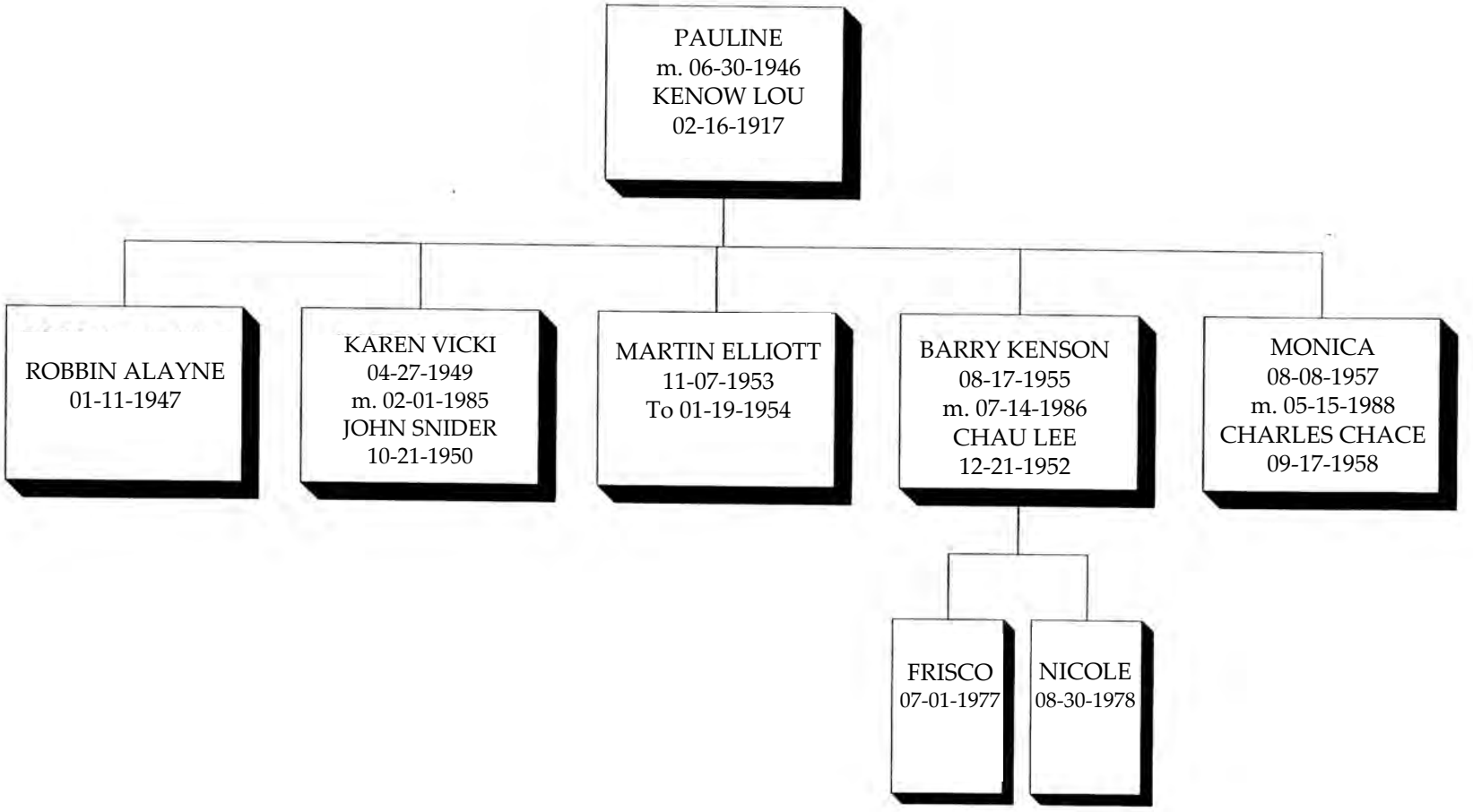
LEE - JAMES - MARY - DOLORES



FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH GENERATION

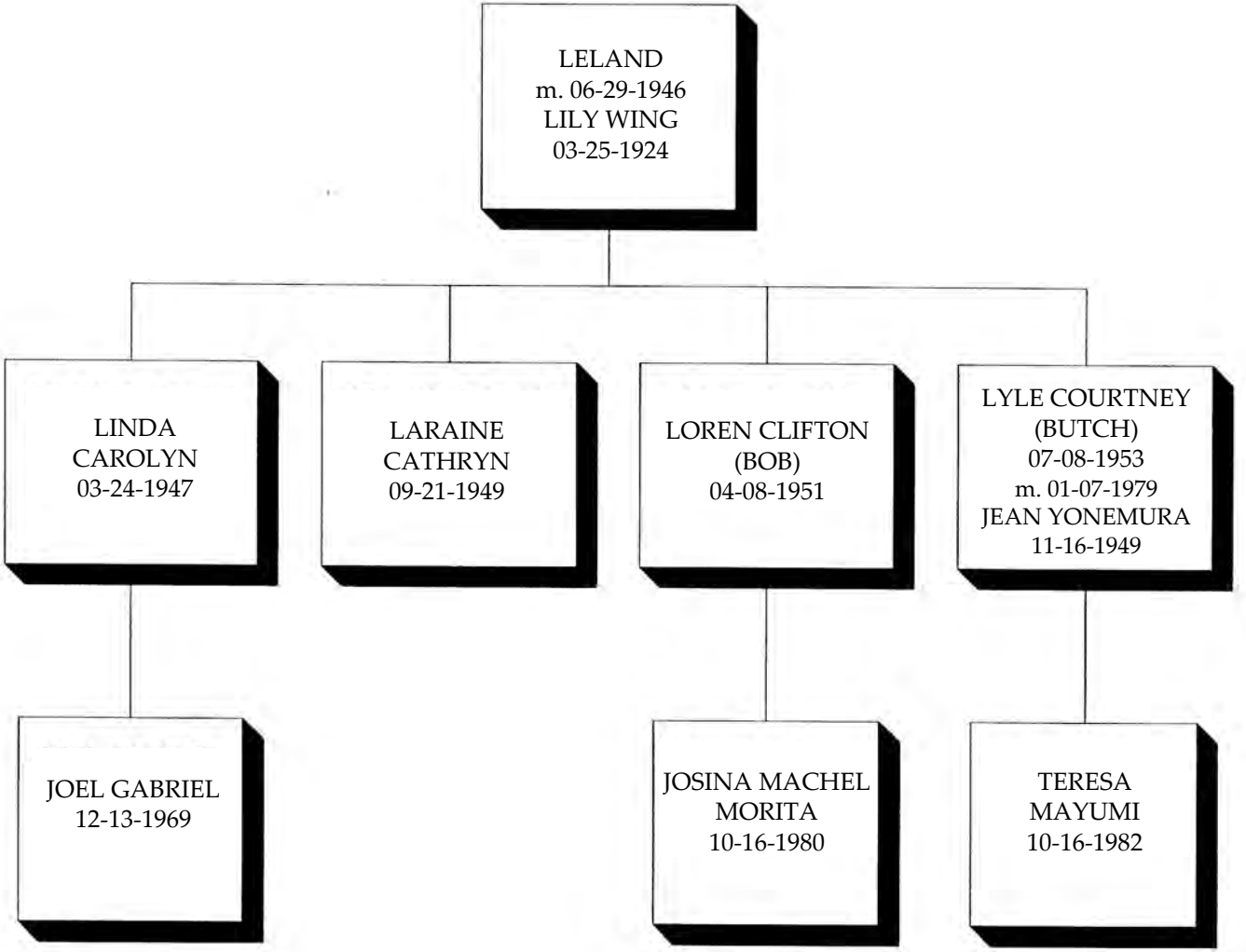
BOWEN

LEE - JAMES - MARY - PAULINE



BOWEN

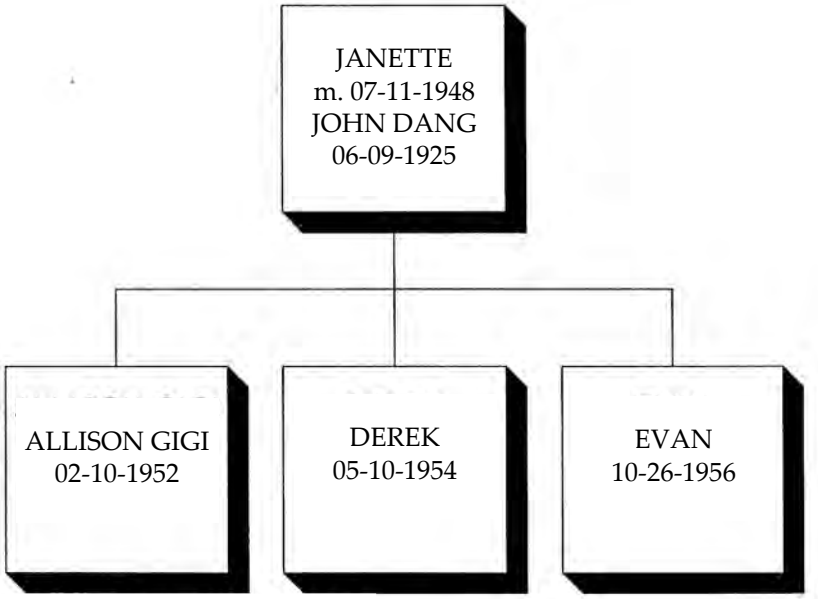
LEE - JAMES - MARY - LELAND



FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH GENERATION

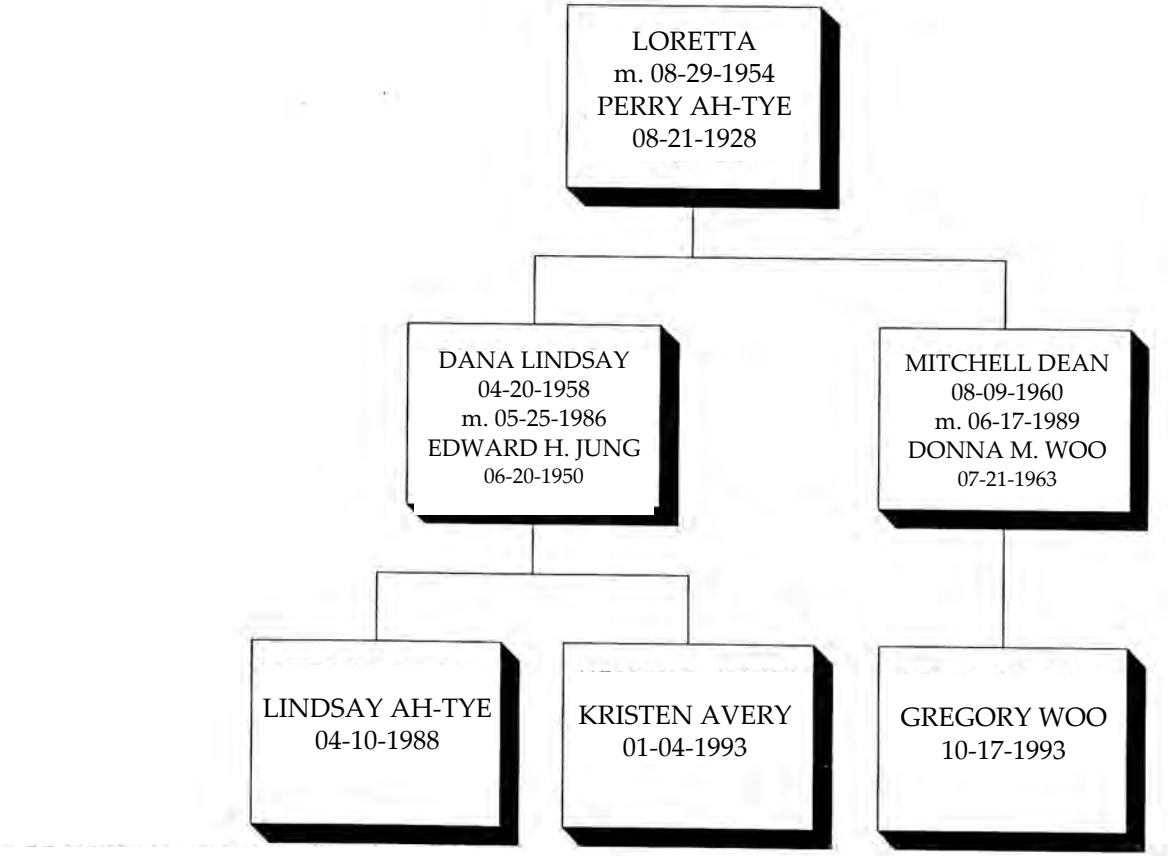
BOWEN

LEE - JAMES - MARY - JANETTE



BOWEN

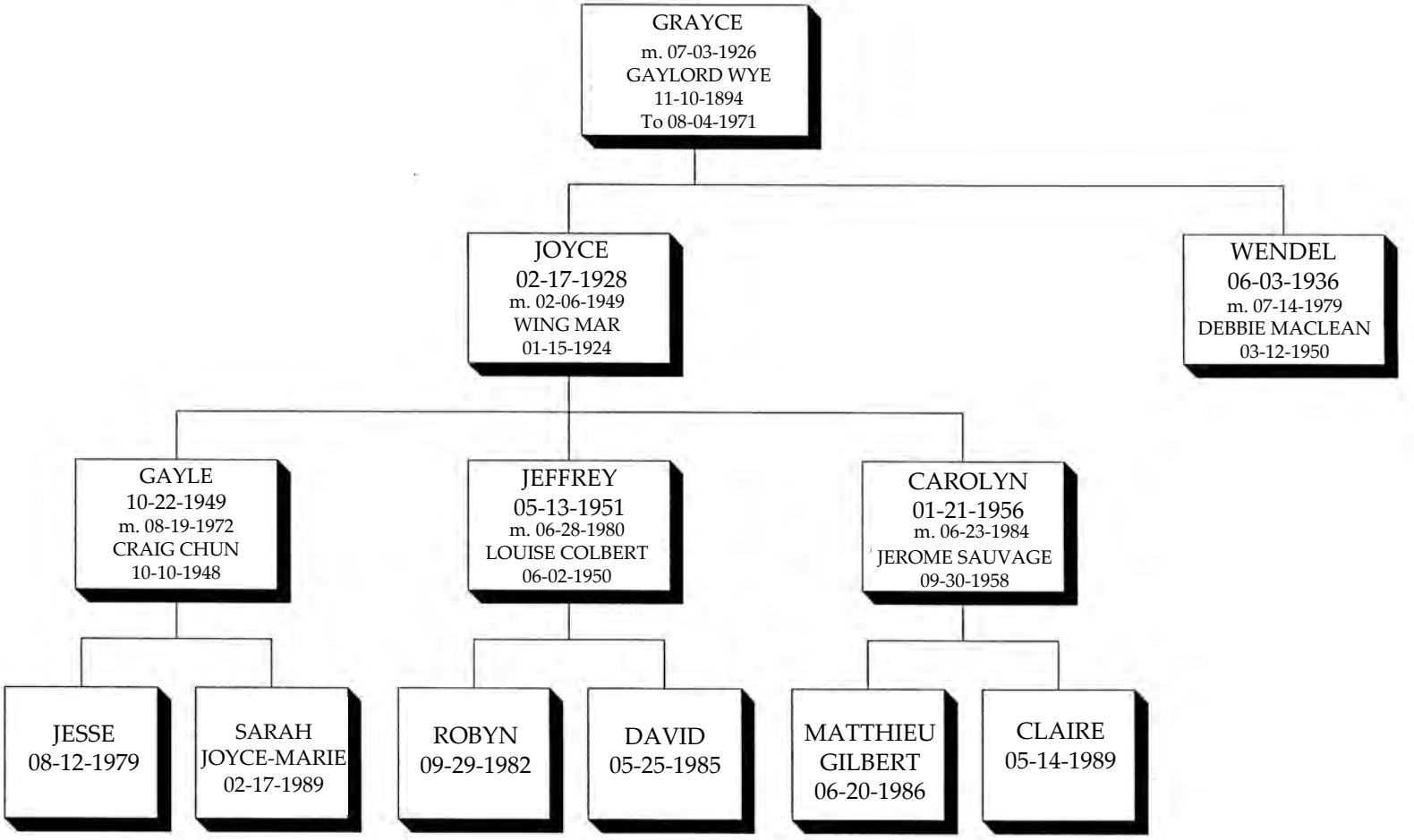
LEE - JAMES - MARY - LORETTA



FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH GENERATION

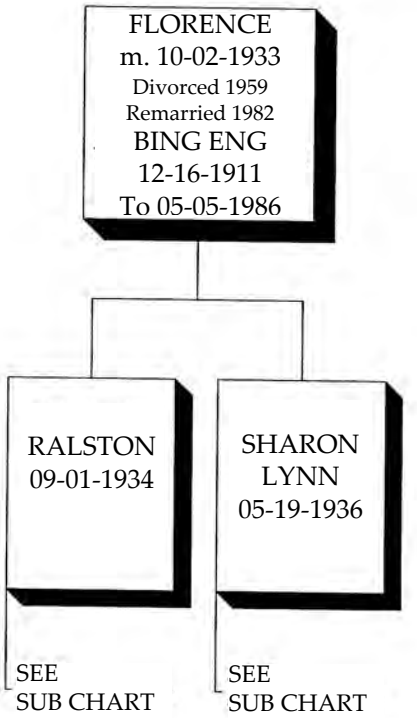
BOWEN

LEE - JAMES - GRAYCE



BOWEN

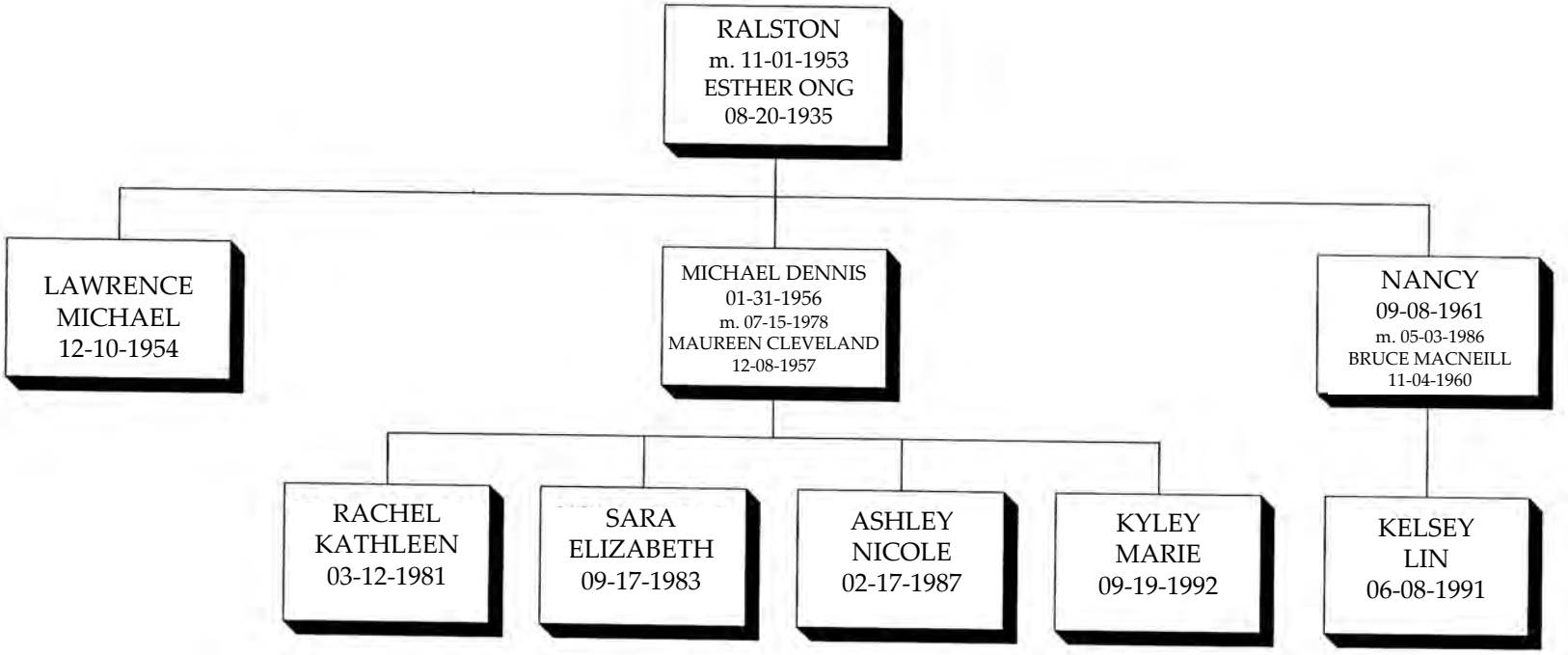
LEE - JAMES - FLORENCE



THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION

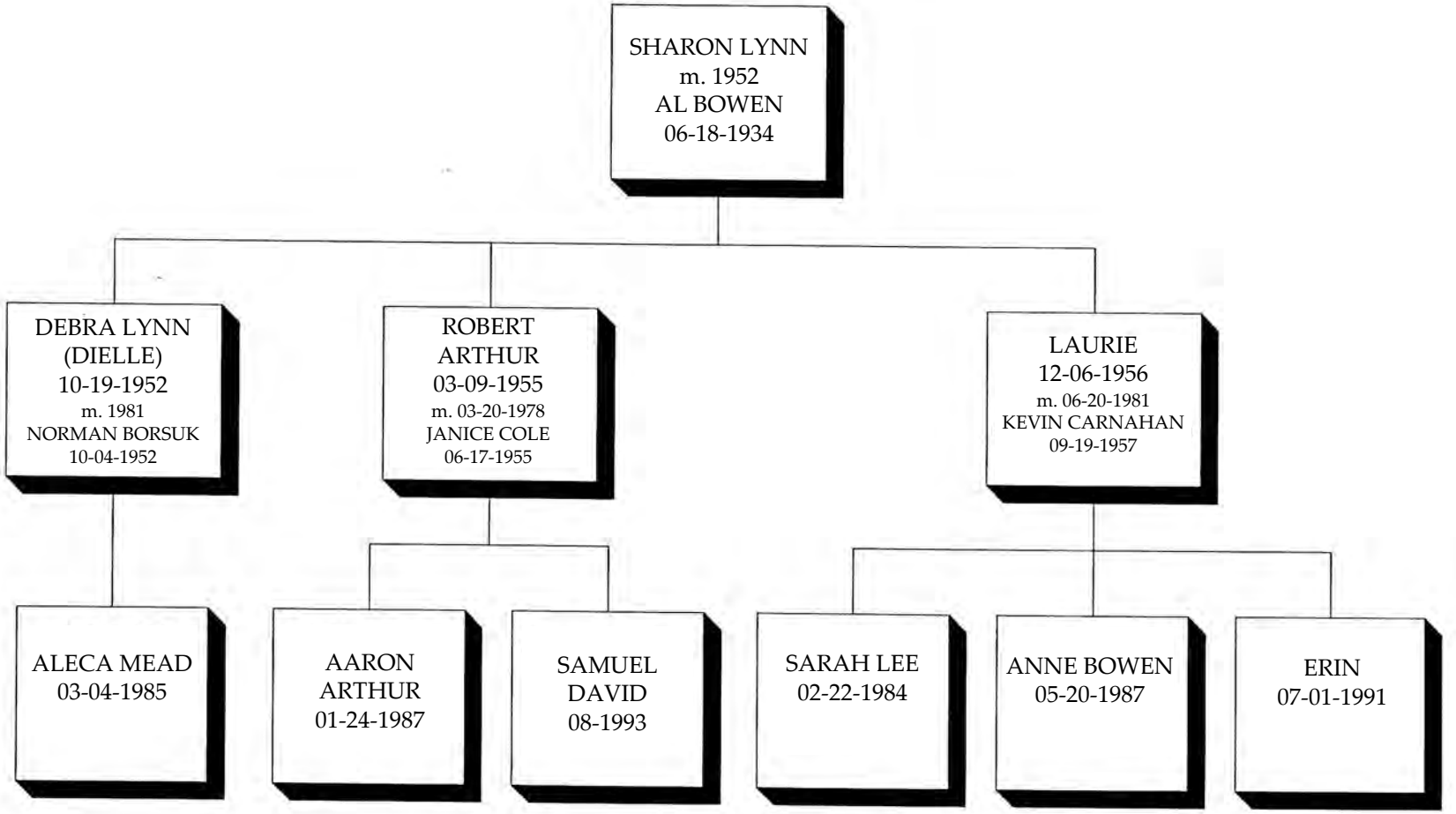
BOWEN

LEE - JAMES - FLORENCE - RALSTON



BOWEN

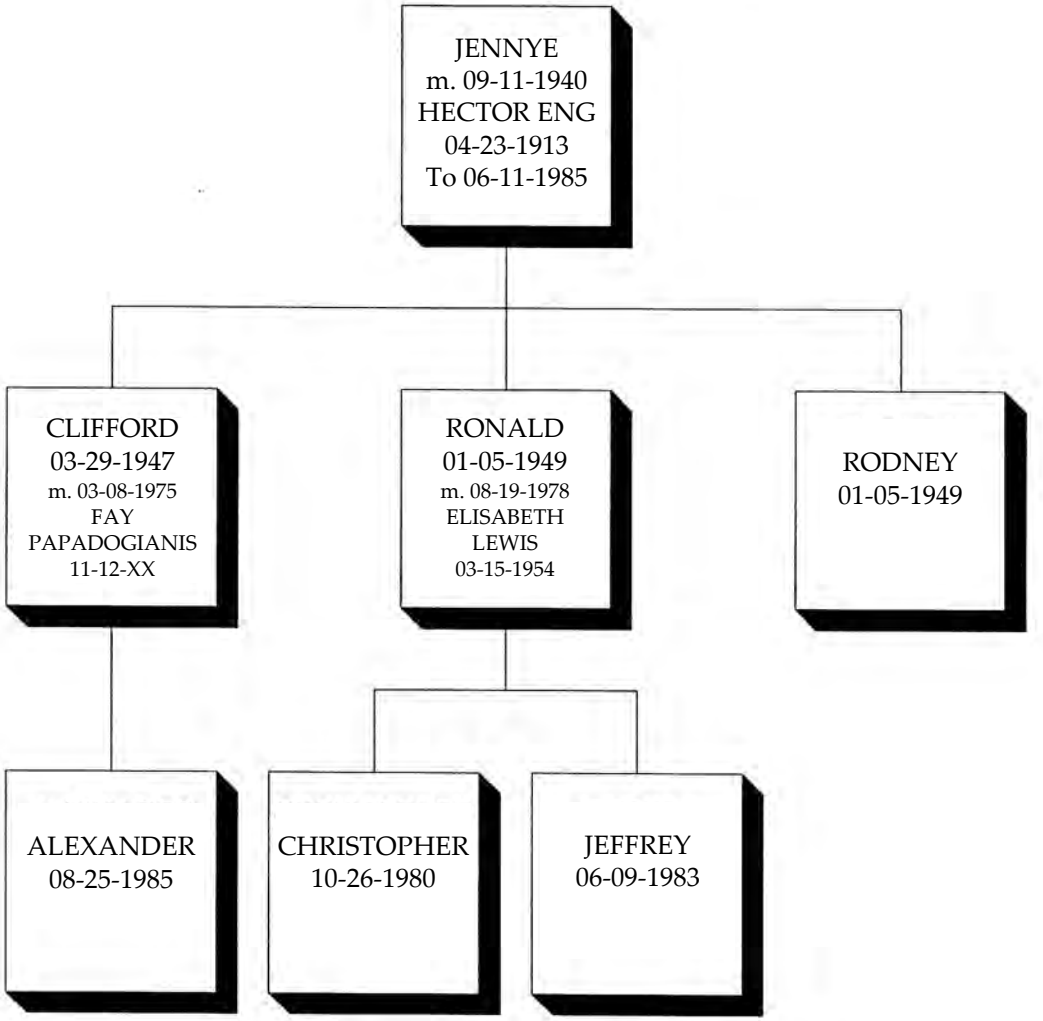
LES - JAMES - FLORENCE - SHARYN



FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH GENERATION

BOWEN

LES - JAMES - JENNYE



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PART VII

MORE FAMILY PHOTOS

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Mamie Bowen Wong and Wong Buck Hin, 1914

The Mamie Bowen and Wong Buck Hin children (l. to r.): Bobby, Dolly, Mable, Ida, Alyce and Lillian, circa 1919

Anna Bowen Wong and Sam Wong, date unknown

Rose Bowen (second from right), Anna Bowen Wong (third from right)–holding Allie, Sam Wong (middle), Elizabeth Bowen (left), date unknown

Dewey Bowen (r.) with members of his vaudeville troupe at Niagara Falls, date unknown

Dewey Bowen, date unknown

Elsye Bowen Won and John Won, 1930

Grayce Bowen and Gay Wye's Wedding, 1926

Many thanks to everyone who graciously lent us their family photos, all of which enrich this book and give us a unique visual picture of the Bowen/Wing family.